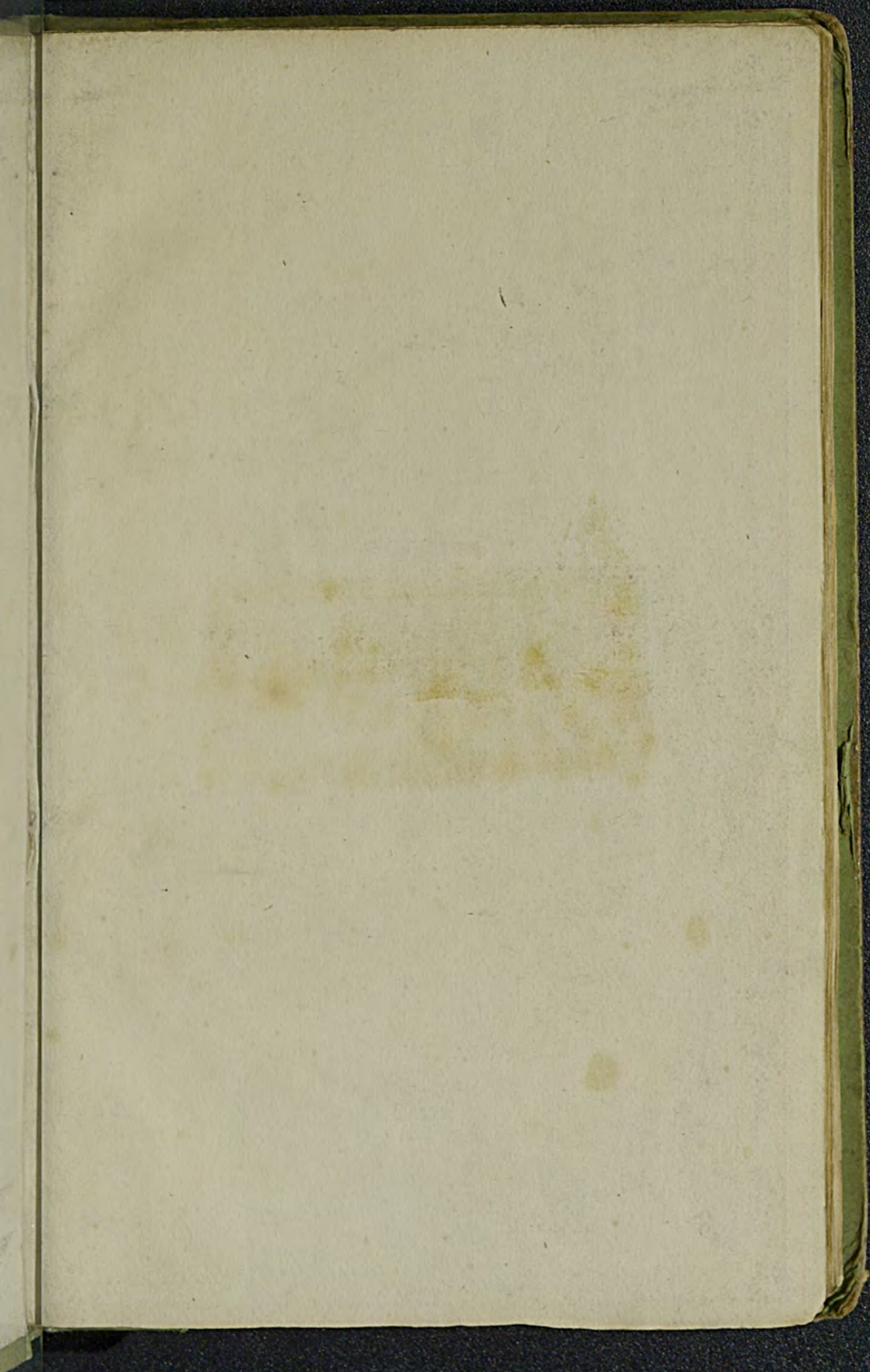
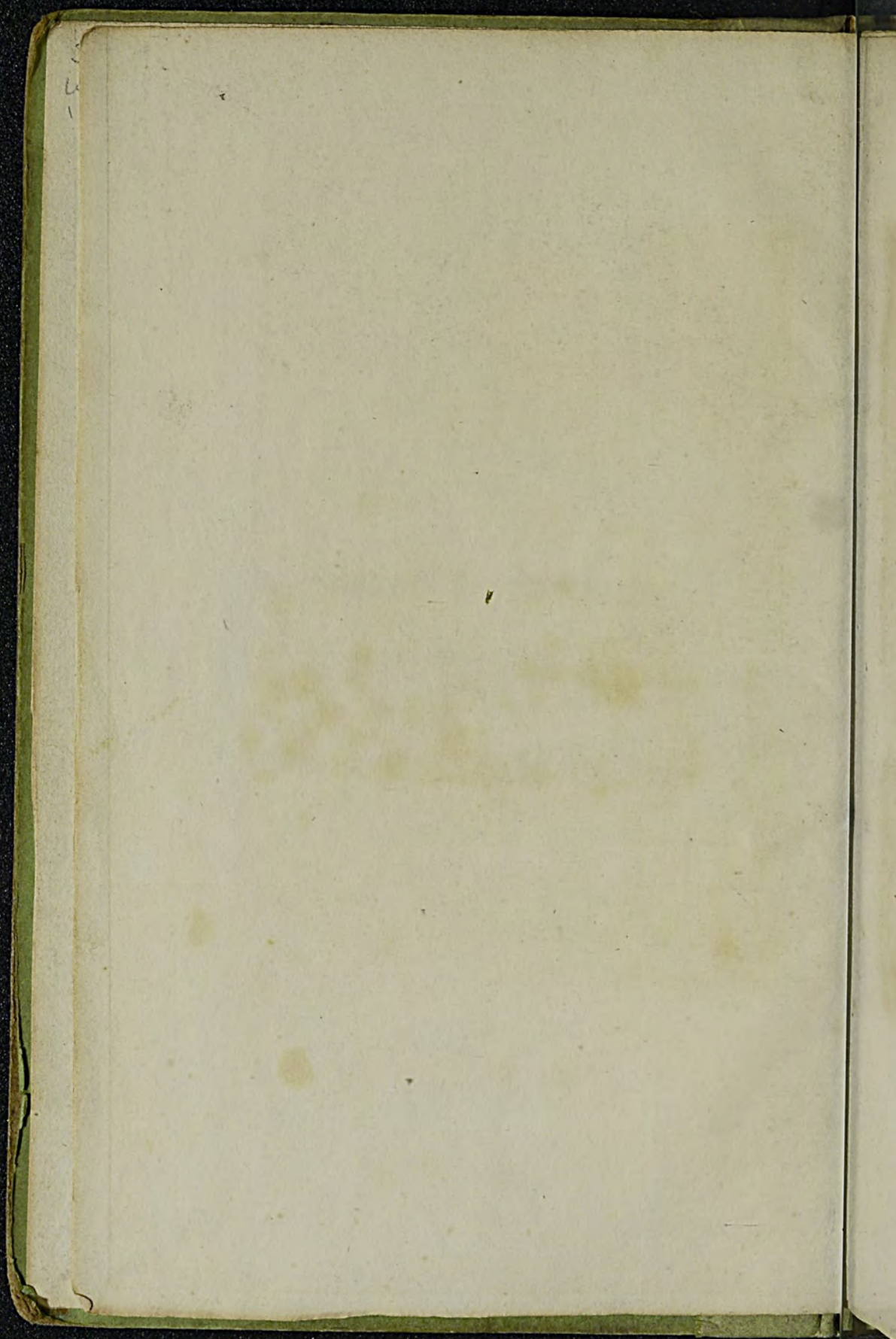


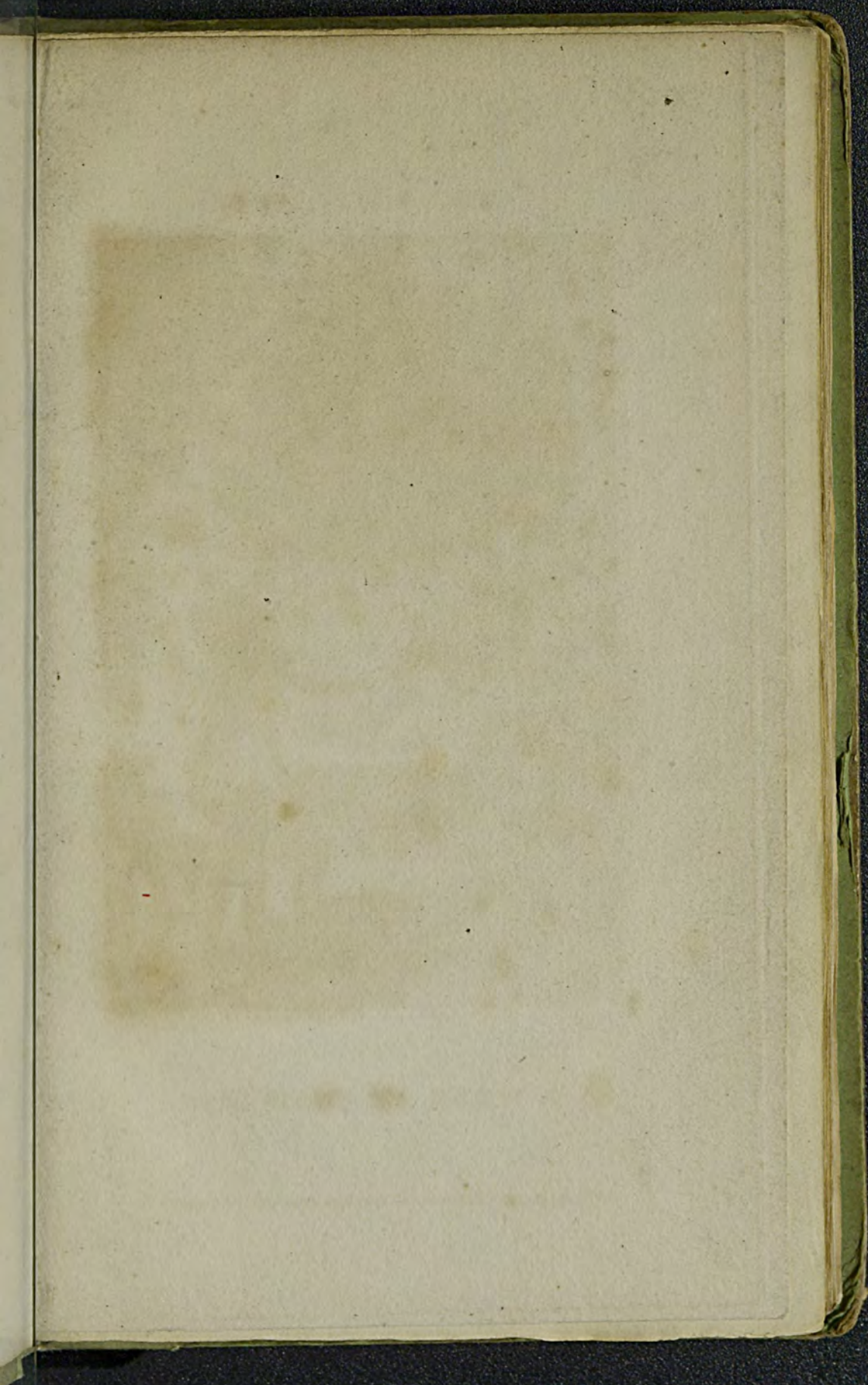
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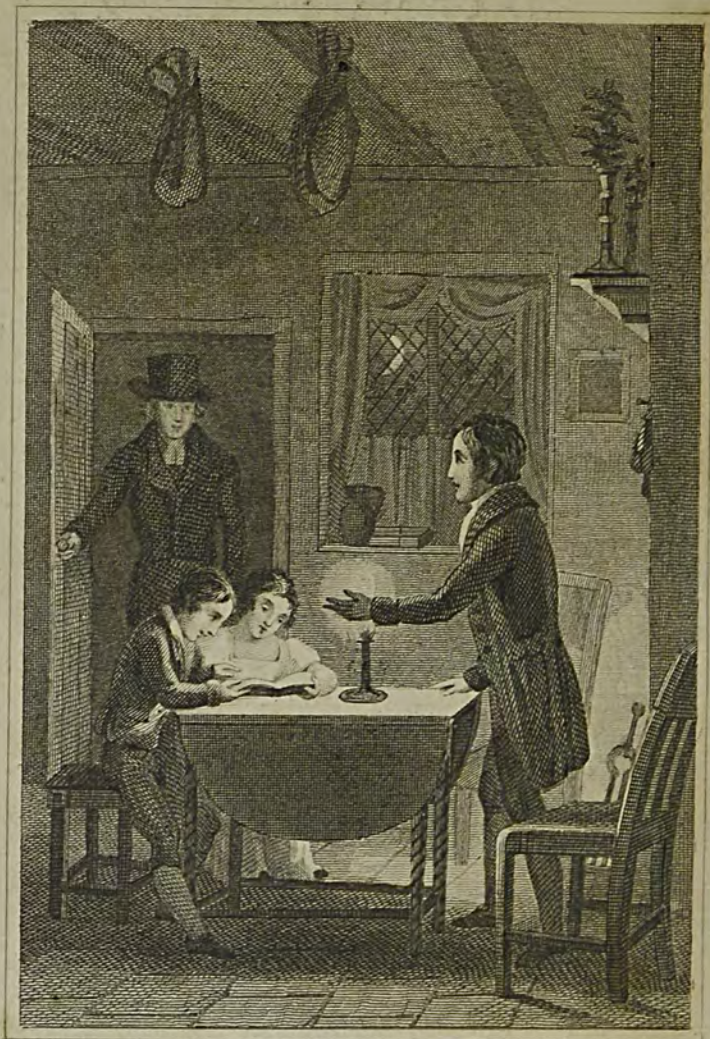
A. WHITAKER.







FRONTISPIECE.



A WEEK AT CHRISTMAS.

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A WEEK
AT
CHRISTMAS.



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1829.

[ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.]

A WEEK

WEEK AT BIRMINGHAM

CHILDREN A.S.

FIRST DAY

It was the first day of the week. The sun
 had risen and the sky was blue. The
 children were all in their places. The
 teacher began to read. The children
 listened with attention. The teacher
 spoke in a clear voice. The children
 were all happy. The teacher was
 kind and gentle. The children were
 all learning. The teacher was
 patient and understanding. The
 children were all growing. The
 teacher was a good teacher. The
 children were all happy. The
 teacher was a good teacher.

[From a manuscript of 1821]

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WEEK AT CHRISTMAS.

FIRST DAY.

IT was the twenty-fifth of December. The sun had risen of a beautiful crimson colour, and shone brighter than fire. The sky and the clouds reflected the glorious light, and promised a fine winter's day. The hoar-frost sparkled like diamonds on the grass, and on every little twig of the high trees that overtopped Ralph Brown's snug cottage. A flagged path led through a small garden from the gate to the cottage-door. Under the windows the border was furnished with rose bushes and other flowering plants, and kept very neat by Ralph's little daughter, Peggy. Her brother Henry cultivated that part of the garden where the cabbages and pot-herbs grew.

The season hitherto had been uncommonly mild ; but this morning Peggy had perceived through the

window, that her marigolds were hanging down their pretty heads after the frosty night: and both children were running out to see their plants, when Ralph called them back, and asked them whether they recollected that it was Christmas-Day, and remembered the duties that would be required of all who profess the Christian Faith. They returned to their father, to hear over again the delightful story of Christ's birth: for he had related to them this part of the Holy Scripture every Christmas-Day, from the time their young minds had been capable of comprehending his words.

Ralph was the parish-clerk at R——, and he always took his children with him to church, and taught them to be very attentive to the service performed there. Moreover, upon every festival and fast, he instructed them on those events which such days are appointed to commemorate, that they might not be at a loss, or confused, during the service at church. And, to enable him to inform them more readily and clearly, he had selected passages concerning such events, and written from them a short account of every holiday appointed by our church.

He now read to them, how Mary the mother of Jesus went up from the city of Nazareth, with

Joseph, her husband, to be taxed, and they went to Bethlehem, the city of David: and while they were there, she was delivered of her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Yet this humble birth of Christ, thus ordered as an example of humility, was announced by angels; for *there were, in the same country, shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night; and the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and said, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.* The shepherds then, in the great glory which shone around them, heard a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* (Luke ii. 8—14.) Now the shepherds having a great desire to see this which was made known unto them by the angel, went in haste to the city of David, and found the child wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in the manger, just as they had been told, and Joseph and Mary by the child; and they published abroad the saying that was told them concerning the child, and returned praising and glorifying God.

“Now, my children,” said Ralph, “you will hear of this, and the prophecies concerning this wonderful event, when you are at church.”

Then, by their father’s directions, Henry and his sister marked in their books the proper psalms, the lessons, the collect, &c. ; and when they had done this, Ralph gave them the following hymn to read.

HYMN ON CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Who would neglect this sacred morn,
That brings to mind our Saviour born !
He who abode with God above,
In realms of bliss, and holy love,
A willing sacrifice yet came,
For us to suffer grief and shame.

O read his history here on earth,
And praise him for his humble birth ;
Learn from the Gospel’s truthful page
How you may best employ your age :
Not by seeking earthly pleasure,
But securing heavenly treasure ;
For earthly things must pass away,
But Christ’s true word shall with us stay,
And raise us up at the last day.

Learn how the sick, oppress’d with pain,
By Christ restor’d to health again,
Were shewn that he had power to heal
The deeper ills which sinners feel :

And those whom demons led astray,
Possess'd by Satan's powerful sway,
Felt that our Saviour's high command
Rebuk'd at once the impious band,
And saw, by faith, that promis'd hour
Of victory over Satan's power.
Read, how the blind restor'd to sight
In *mind*, receiv'd the heavenly light;
And, through the miracle He wrought,
Beheld the truths that Jesus taught.
Read, how the deaf he made to hear;
But 'twas not only to the ear
Salvation's joyful news was given;
The *mind* receiv'd the news from heaven.

O joyful tidings ! joyful day !
That Christ was born to shew the way,
How we, through penitence and prayer,
May in that glorious Gospel share :
For though in Adam all must die,
And in the grave a while must lie ;
Yet all in Christ shall rise again,
Who wills not that he died in vain.

Then render praise to God on high,
Lift your glad voices to the sky,
To Christ your grateful offerings give,
The Lamb who died that you might live.

After the children had read this hymn, and their

father had explained to them such parts as they did not quite understand, he bade them prepare themselves for church: but before they went, little Peggy desired to know more particularly about the resurrection of the body. She said, it was more easy to believe that Christ could make the blind to open their eyes, and see like other men, and the deaf to hear as others hear, the lame to walk, or the sick to be whole again, than that he should make men, who were actually dead and eaten by worms, to rise up from the earth with renewed bodies, and be the same men again.

“It is, indeed, a power far beyond our comprehension,” replied Ralph; “but, *with God all things are possible*. He who at first created us out of the dust of the earth, may surely raise up our dead bodies again. Lazarus was dead, and had lain in the grave four days; yet Christ shewed the power given him by his Father, and raised him from the grave, and gave him to his friends again, alive and in health. And this was to prove to all people, that he had the power of raising us up at the last day, according to his promise: *This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* (John vi. 40.) Now, surely, this is enough to command our belief;

and it is no more difficult to understand how the whole body, when gone to decay, can be raised up again, than how the eye, or ear, that had perished can be restored."

"But," replied Peggy, "one can still better imagine what one has seen and heard of in our own days. We have heard of several, who have been sick, and cured by medicine; who, having become blind, have recovered their sight; also of the deaf who have got their hearing again; but for the dead, gone to decay in the ground, for them to rise up again, how wonderful!"

"True," said Henry, "and I remember in the lesson one Sunday last month, (John chap. xii.) it was related, how that many of the Jews came to see Lazarus, who was raised from the dead; which being the cause of great numbers believing in Jesus, the chief priests consulted how they might put Lazarus to death; and certain Greeks came, desiring to see Jesus, who had raised him from the dead. Is not there time for us, father, to read that chapter before we get ready for church?"

Ralph was always particularly anxious to give his children instruction at those moments when their inclination promised attention; and, upon

looking at his watch, he was happy to find there was sufficient time; so he immediately looked out for the chapter Henry had just mentioned, where Christ, speaking of his own death and resurrection, says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* (John xii. 24.) After reading all that related to this subject in the fore-mentioned chapter, Ralph turned to the first epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, and read: *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is*

sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians xv. 35—57.)

After reading this, Peggy's faith was increased, and she went gladly to prepare herself for church. While she was getting ready, Mr. Nicholson, the curate, was going past the gate, and seeing Ralph standing at the door, he stopped to enquire whether he was ready, observing to him that the bells were ringing. Ralph answered, that he was only waiting a moment for his little girl; that they had been reading a chapter in the Bible for her information respecting the resurrection, on which subject they had just had some discourse. Henry and his sister now joining them, Ralph took hold of Peggy's hand, and they all walked together towards the church; Mr. Nicholson and Ralph conversing by the way on the subject that had engaged him with his children. The good curate said he should always be happy to assist him in the pleasing task of instructing his children whenever he wished it, either on a religious, or any other desirable topic; and with a view towards informing and amusing them, he had bought a little book for them, which he hoped would provide them useful and agreeable employment during the long evenings of winter. "I shall bring

them their Christmas gift to-night," added he. This promise he performed, and sat down, as was frequently his custom, to chat a little with Ralph.

The children, pleased with their new book, began immediately to examine it. They found it treated of beasts, and birds, and fishes, and insects, also of plants, minerals, and various other interesting matters concerning natural history. There were, moreover, some beautiful coloured prints of the things described.

Henry and Peggy were impatient to turn over the leaves, that they might see the prints, and choose a subject for their evening's amusement. Henry wanted to read about horses and dogs, of which there were some very nice prints; but Peggy wished to read the description of some very curious looking birds. Their father heard them disputing upon this point, and reminded them that they were wasting as much time as would serve to satisfy them both on the different subjects of their curiosity. Peggy was still turning over the leaves, when she exclaimed, "O, Henry, see this beautiful butterfly! Now this, though neither a bird nor a beast, may, I hope, suit us both: pray do let us read about it." Henry

wisely thought it better to yield to her fancy, than to waste any more time in contending the matter; and as he was quite ignorant of the nature of the butterfly, he was amply rewarded for his compliance. So they read the description of the beautiful insect represented in the plate, with its fine painted wings: of all its gay habits of flying from flower to flower in the sunshine, enjoying the delights of the gardens and the meadows. Then they read the curious history of its life from the egg, which is not bigger than the head of the smallest pin.

The butterfly generally deposits her eggs upon the plant which will best suit the young worm, or caterpillar, for food, when it shall be hatched; for the young of butterflies do not come forth from the egg in the form of their mother, who, though a butterfly when she laid her eggs, was once only a little worm herself.

Here the children interrupted their reading, to talk of the pretty white butterflies, with dark spots, that they had seen in the cabbage garden during the summer; and of the caterpillars they had seen devouring the cabbage leaves. "And so, these came from butterflies' eggs, did they, father?"

Ralph. There is no doubt of it, my dears; but read on, and you will find what became of the caterpillars.

“A caterpillar, when full grown, spins from its own body fine silken threads, which it wraps around itself, and by them fastens itself to some convenient safe place. It then appears to die, and to be inclosed in a shelly substance, somewhat in form like a little coffin; in which state it is called a chrysalis. After remaining some time in this death-like state, it becomes animated, gnaws its way out, and leaves its little coffin empty. No longer in the form of a caterpillar, it is now a beautiful fly with wings, exactly resembling her who laid the egg from which it first proceeded.”

“How very curious this is!” exclaimed both the children at once.

“Yes,” said Mr. Nicholson; “and it is a good emblem of the resurrection of the body. The torpid state of the caterpillar resembles our death: in the chrysalis state, it is like us in our tombs; and its second life, like our resurrection, when our glorified bodies shall assume new powers, though still the same being.”

"True," replied Peggy, "I see and believe all things are possible with God."

Mr. N. All things, as we learn them, prompt us to adore Him.

Henry. This is a very beautiful history of the butterfly. I will look for some eggs next year, and watch the changes. Are there any more curious changes among the insects, or any other animals?

Mr. N. Many, my dear. I expect you will find several in that book. But is not every thing changing throughout its existence? What resemblance is there between a peacock in full plumage, and the egg from which it came? What resemblance does a plant, a great tree for instance, bear to the seed that was sown in the ground? Yet I have heard, that, by the help of a microscope, you may see in the heart of an acorn, the form of the oak tree which springs from it when sown in the earth.

"O dear, how I wish I had a microscope, father," said Henry.

"It would afford you great amusement, no

doubt," replied Ralph; "but it is an expensive article."

"And so little as you have seen," added Mr. Nicholson, "so little as you know, you may find quite as much amusement in other things, for several years to come. For instance, would it not be more curious to see with your own eyes the perfect form of any other plant, in its root or seed? This little book speaks of several seeds and roots, wherein the young plant or flower may be seen without the aid of glasses; particularly the root of the tulip, from which (its wintry tomb) that fine flower rises every spring. If Peggy can spare you one of her roots, perhaps we may all see it."

Peggy was sorry to destroy a root of such a beautiful plant as the tulip; but as she had a good many of them, and wished much to see what Mr. Nicholson had mentioned, she gave him one of those she had intended to plant in the spring, and he opened it very carefully with his penknife. They then all plainly discerned the form of the flower exactly; a tulip complete in shape, but very very small, and quite white: for there is no colour in any plant till the light of heaven has shone upon it to perfect it.

The children were extremely delighted with what they had learned this evening, and begged their father would allow them to read more: but he said they had enough for reflection at present, but should read some of this book every evening during the Christmas holidays; and they might now compose their minds for evening prayer, reflecting upon the various and wonderful works of their great Creator. "And forget not," rejoined Mr. Nicholson, "how he did, as at this time, send the holy Jesus to sow the good seed in our hearts. I trust, that which has this day been sown in your hearts, will be nourished into eternal life, and not like that which was sown by the way-side, where, when the sower soweth the word, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts." He then recalled to their minds the chapter they had read in the morning, (mentioned to him by Ralph,) and impressed upon them the necessity of taking care of that spiritual part which is to be nourished within us, and which, when so nourished, is, under the influence of the quickening spirit, to become a spiritual body and incorruptible, rising from the corruption of our natural body.—"*Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. xv. 57.)

SECOND DAY.

THE day after Christmas, being St. Stephen's Day, that is, the day set apart by our Church, to commemorate his martyrdom, Ralph called his children to him, and, from his own little manuscript book, read to them as follows.

“Most of the Scripture names have some signification suitable to the character and circumstances of the person named. In the Greek tongue, Stephen signifies a crown: and the saint of whom we speak was the first entitled to the crown of martyrdom, the first who died in support of his faith in Christ. He was *a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*, (Acts vi. 5 :) and we learn that he was also full of power, and did great wonders and miracles among the people; and many learned people from different countries came to dispute with him, and *they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which*

said, *We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.* (Acts vi. 10, 11.)

“Upon this, Stephen was taken up and brought to the council; but so far from being irritated or discomposed at the injustice of his enemies, all that sat in council beheld him stedfastly, and his countenance was like that of an angel. In his defence, he shewed, from the history of the Jews, the hardness of their hearts, their persecution of the prophets, and, lastly, how they had put to death Jesus Christ, the Messenger, the Holy One of God.

“Then the people were more than ever enraged : but he, (Stephen,) being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* (Acts vii. 55, 56.) With increasing rage the Jews now cast him out of the city, and stoned him ; but, in the midst of all his pain, he still trusted in God, calling upon Him, and saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;* (Acts vii. 59.) And when his pains became excessive, so far from feeling resentment towards his cruel enemies, he followed the example of our blessed Saviour, and, kneeling down, he prayed,

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he died, or, as the Scripture terms it, fell asleep." (Acts vii. 60.)

Here Ralph came to the close of his history, and Henry said, "O, father, he would be sure to go to heaven, to Jesus, for whose sake he died. What a fine thing to be a martyr! I wish there could be martyrs now, that I might be one!"

"Blessed be God, that we have no such persecution in our days," replied Ralph: "these are peaceable times for the Church."

"Yes," said Mr. Nicholson, who had called in his way to church while Ralph was reading, but would not suffer him to interrupt his lesson, "yes, indeed, Henry, these are peaceable times; but there may still be enough of martyrdom. If you have resolution to take every opportunity of suffering in the cause of virtue, for Christ's sake, and of denying yourself, instead of indulging your own natural inclinations; every time you do this, every time you give up your worldly interest, or relinquish your worldly pleasures, for the cause of Christianity, I trust such sacrifices will be accepted as a proof of the *spirit* of martyrdom."

“Still,” replied Henry, “I should glory in an opportunity of proving my faith, and my love, and my courage, all at one stroke.”

“Thank God, my child,” rejoined Ralph, “that our trials are lighter than theirs. Yet there are many hard trials of our faith and resolution, even here, in a country professing Christianity.”

Mr. N. We may say we *die daily*, in subduing ourselves, and living after Christ’s example.

Henry. Yes, it is a hard thing to forgive our enemies. I wonder how St. Stephen could feel so kindly towards his, when they were throwing great stones at him. What a passion John Barnes was in, when I only hit him by accident, as we were playing at bowls! and no wonder, for he was in shocking pain. Now, if any body was to do so to me, by design, I am sure I should hate him.

Ralph. Then you are not of a Christian temper, Henry: you could not be a martyr.

Mr. N. It will be a great help to us, in all our trials, if, by faith, we hold stedfastly in our view, as did St. Stephen, the heavens opened, and Jesus

on the right hand of God ; if also we keep in view all that he suffered for us on earth : for as He, and as St. Stephen did, after His example, so must we, every one, forgive our enemies from our hearts, praying that their sins may not be laid to their charge ; and, as we desire happiness for ourselves, so must we for them also.

This discourse caused Henry and his sister to form resolutions for improvement in their tempers, and an increased desire to live as Christians ; but resolutions may be frequently formed, ere any great improvement takes place. Mr. Nicholson arose to go to church, and they all followed him.

On the evening of this day, the children came to their father, reminding him of his promise, and he gave them the book of Natural History to read, just as Mr. Nicholson entered. On considering the choice of a subject, Peggy said she made no doubt but all would be very entertaining ; and if Henry chose to read about the horses, or the dogs, he might do so. But Henry said, nothing could be more amusing and instructive than what they had read the evening before, and he wished his father, or Mr. Nicholson, would choose a subject.

“Every thing in nature is wonderful,” replied Mr. Nicholson ; “and nothing can be more delightful and instructive to the young mind, than to examine the contrivances for use, and happiness, and beauty, that are shewn by our Almighty Creator in all his works. I scarcely know how to point out one thing rather than another to your observation, being convinced that each subject noticed in this little book, is well calculated to awaken your curiosity, and fix your attention ; to delight your minds, and fill you with admiration, and gratitude, and love towards God. As we last night read about the butterfly, perhaps you would like to hear what other insects undergo a similar change. Although there is a greater number of that description than a book of this size can mention, I see it treats of one of the most remarkable. It will surprise you to hear that every piece of silk that is worn by the ladies throughout the whole world ; all the rich hangings of silk, that we hear of in palaces, and castles, and fine houses ; all the ribbons ; in short, every thing of silk, is the produce of an ugly brown worm, which is called a silk-worm.”

The children expressed their amazement. Henry thought some kinds of silk had grown upon trees, as the cotton ; and some upon beasts, like wool :

and Peggy had never thought about it, more than that it was very beautiful. Just as they were preparing to read, Mr. Nicholson's servant-girl came to tell him that he was wanted at home. As he took leave, he desired them to proceed with their book, which they did as follows.

“Silk-worms were first known in China, but have been, at various times, introduced into all the warm countries in Europe, especially Italy, and the southern parts of France, where they are fed upon the leaves of the mulberry trees. They may be kept in England, but require great care and attention, the climate being unfavourable both to the health of the worm, and to the growth of the mulberry tree. Where the leaves of this tree cannot be obtained, those of the lettuce make a tolerable substitute; but the silk of the worm so fed will be of an inferior colour.

“When first hatched, the caterpillar, or silk-worm, is of a dark colour, and very small. If the weather be warm, it will hatch early in the spring. As it grows bigger, it changes its skin, casting off the old one. During this operation, it eats little, and seems sickly; but in the course of a day or two, it appears dressed in its new coat, and is very lively. Its growth is such as to oblige it to have

several new coats in the course of the summer ; at the latter end of which, it becomes a large, thick, brown caterpillar, much wrinkled in the skin, and very voracious. When full grown, it ceases to eat, and wanders about till it finds a convenient place for fastening itself, in order to spin its little web, or winding-sheet, around it. Wrapped up in a ball of beautiful yellow silk, somewhat less than a pigeon's egg, it remains in the chrysalis state fourteen or fifteen days, and then comes forth a large brown moth, thicker in the body, but with smaller wings, than a butterfly. In this state, it does not eat, lives a very short time, just lays its eggs, and dies. The silk, from which we have all our beautiful manufactures, is then wound off from the cocoon or ball before mentioned, previous to the appearance of the moth ; because the silk might be injured by the animal's gnawing out a passage for itself. These balls are thrown into water, a little warm, and by taking an end of the fine silk, the whole is easily wound off upon a reel. When all the silk is thus wound off, there remains an oval ball of a very tough texture, something like a little bladder, and within this lies the chrysalis ; but as the silk, singly, would be far too fine for use, several of these balls are generally thrown into warm water, and wound together upon a reel, and the silk

is then tied up in skeins. It may be dyed of any colour; and, after being twisted by machinery, is woven into pieces of silk, ribbon, &c. for sale."

Henry and Peggy were very much pleased with the history of this useful little creature; and more and more astonished, as they thought of the very great quantities of worms which must be at work before one yard of silk could be produced. Understanding that they might be reared in England, they begged their father would try to get them some of their eggs.

"That I hope I may easily do," replied Ralph; "for I believe the young people at the rectory have silk-worms. At least, I recollect Mr. Nicholson shewing me some he had from thence last year; and he bade me remark how firmly these little eggs adhered to the paper he held in his hand. 'The moth,' said he, 'when she deposits her eggs, is provided with a kind of glutinous fluid for fastening them; an admirable contrivance in nature, to prevent the light eggs of such insects being dispersed and lost. It is thus,' added he, 'that we may always see the wisdom of our Creator in the least of his works.'"

This history of the silk-worm being so short,

they had time, before they went to bed, to read of several other winged insects, and of their changes : of bees and wasps, and their changes ; of their curious habits, of the structure of their cells, and of their young ones being reared in them. This book also gave a pretty full account of the honey-bees kept in hives ; but as Ralph Brown kept hives in his garden, and the children had been his assistants in managing them, their curiosity led them rather to enquire about wasps. They had frequently seen those large nests which wasps make in the ground ; but now they read of little nests which hang from the bushes, and of the manner in which they are constructed.

“Wasps are frequently seen in the spring, scraping from old palings, from window-frames, and other wood work, the thinnest imaginable surface of the wood ; with this, they contrive to manufacture a kind of substance, very much resembling lawn paper, but of an ash-colour. Of this they form cells like those of the honeycomb. In each cell the female deposits an egg, from whence proceeds a grub, or maggot, which is fed by the old wasps, till it becomes winged, and can provide for itself. The nest, formed of these cells within, is nicely covered over with many folds of this paper-like substance, disposed so as to make it impene-

trable to rain. Its shape is like that of a peg-top, and not often larger, though some have been seen as large as a man's head. To the boughs of trees, or shrubs, and very frequently gooseberry-bushes, this little nest is firmly attached, and hangs with the pointed part downwards."

THIRD DAY.

ON the morning of this day, when Henry and his sister awoke, they recollected that it was another holiday, and they quickly washed and dressed themselves, that they might hear their father read to them some account of the day. They thought also of their evening readings, and the choice of subjects they had in view. As soon as they and their father had finished their morning prayers, "It is," said they, "St. John's Day; let us hear something of his history." Ralph took his manuscript from his shelf, and read as follows.

"St. John the Evangelist was by profession a fisherman. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and a native of Bethsaida in Galilee. He was that disciple whom Jesus loved; and who, it appears, was with Jesus at all the most striking periods of his life. Peter and James, and more particularly John, were his attendants upon the

most extraordinary occasions. He was, by the other apostles, known to be beloved by Jesus. When Peter was desirous of being informed who it was that should betray Christ, he did not venture to propose the question himself, but beckoned to John, that he should ask who it should be. *He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot.* (John xiii. 25, 26.)

“John attended him at the crucifixion; and to him Jesus gave the strongest proof of confidence and regard. When expiring on the cross, he saw his mother, and this disciple whom he loved, and *he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.* (John xix. 26, 27.) He it was, who, rejoicing with Peter at the news of the resurrection, did outrun Peter, and arrive first at the sepulchre. He bore witness also of the ascension, and has given us, in his Gospel, the fullest account of the discourses that Christ held with his disciples.

“After the ascension, John preached the Gospel, and was imprisoned at Jerusalem, along with

Peter ; and when called before the council, and forbid to preach, or do miracles in Christ's name, *Peter and John answered and said, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* (Acts iv. 19, 20.)

After this, finding that they dared not punish them, so many of the people were for them, they let them go. He was again imprisoned with the other apostles, but the angel of the Lord opened the prison-doors, and brought them forth: and he continued to preach in divers places. He also wrote the Revelations, where he mentions, in the ninth verse of the first chapter, being in the isle called Patmos, where many of the early writers agree in saying that he was banished by one of the Roman emperors. In the reign of another of the emperors, he returned to Ephesus, where he died at a very advanced age, having published his Gospel, confirming the other three by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, though fuller of doctrine than any of theirs. He also wrote some of the Epistles."

"What, then, he was not a martyr?" eagerly enquired Henry.

"He lived and died in the service of his Lord and Master," replied Ralph ; "and would have

gladly suffered any death that it had pleased God to appoint: for he shunned not any evil which publishing his faith was likely to have brought upon him."

Henry. True; but I should have liked that he had received the glory of having been a martyr, braving torture for the testimony of his faith.

Ralph. Long-suffering, patience, and a uniform perseverance in doing good, sacrificing ease and selfishness, every thing that can interfere with our duty, is the true glory of a Christian, let our trials come in what form they may. I have seen much of the disappointments of this world, my children, and that makes my sacrifices easier to me than they used to be. Such as they yet are, I hope, through the grace of God, to perform them faithfully, and to guide you, my dear children, in that path which alone leads to glory. In youth, the love of the world, and all its good things, its pomps, and its vanities, and the lusts of the flesh, are hard trials, and will require all your strength, ay, Henry, all your desire for martyrdom, to overcome them. And now, my dears, the bell rings for church service; go, get ready to attend it. This is the Sabbath, as well as St. John's Day.

The children readily obeyed their father, and,

after passing the day in cheerfulness, they drew to the evening lamp with their book, and Henry asked his father to direct them to a subject. But, before he had time to reply, Peggy said, "If there was any change in the form of creatures which were not of the winged tribe, she should like to read of them, particularly any thing which was not covered from sight at the time of its transformation: for what I should like above all things," added she, "would be to see the change, daily advancing from one form to another. Eggs change into chickens, worms into butterflies, acorns into oak trees; but all these changes are unseen till they are accomplished; and I want to see them as they advance to perfection."

"By opening an egg, or a chrysalis, or an acorn," replied her father, "at each period of their change, you may see every stage of the progress they make."

Peggy. True; but then I should destroy the subject, and put an end to the progress. Is there nothing of the kind goes on above ground, that I can have under my own eyes?

Ralph. How would you like to have a frog formed under your eyes, Peggy?

Peggy. I would rather have a prettier animal; but tell me, how do the frogs change, and from what do they come?

Henry was also very eager to hear about the frogs: so Ralph looked out for the page in their book which described them, and Peggy read.

“Frogs deposit their spawn, or eggs, in ditches, or any standing water, very early in the spring. This spawn is a jelly-like substance, with dark spots in it. These spots grow larger and darker, till, at last, they become animated, and are called tadpoles. Their form appears all head and tail. These are the most alert, nimble little creatures that can be imagined: upon the least agitation of the water, they instantly conceal themselves among the mud at the bottom; a power of rapid motion kindly given them by their Creator, to save them from birds, or other creatures, which would make them an easy prey, from being always in very shallow water. Multitudes, indeed, do perish thus every year; but whoever has observed the innumerable shoals of these animals in the ditches, ought to discern the care of Providence over all: the prolific quantity of these animals provides food for birds, without either endangering the total destruction of the frog race, or permitting them

to overrun the earth, as in Egypt, where they became, by the command of God, a great plague, to punish Pharaoh the king for his disobedience, as is related in the eighth chapter of Exodus. Great numbers also perish, when the spring is so dry as not to afford them a cover of water; for, in the tadpole state, they cannot travel over land in search of water, as frogs do: yet, after all that perish, no one will say that there is not plenty of frogs. As the tadpoles grow larger and stronger, that part which was round like a head, lengthens; the tail becomes thicker and shorter, and four very fine mossy-looking fibres grow from the sides of the broad or head part, which increase in length and thickness: they become fleshy, and assume the appearance of legs. About the middle of the summer, not only the face is discernible, but the whole form of the frog; yet with a tail, which, when the creature begins to hop about, would be a very great incumbrance, and accordingly, we see, that, by the time the frog is perfected, this tail has shrunk up, leaving only a small protuberance.

“The history of toads is similar to that of frogs. Many people have supposed the toad to be a venomous animal, but repeated trials have changed this opinion almost universally. Toads live to a great

age: they will exist with very little air. Wonderful stories have been told of their being found at their full growth in blocks of marble, stone, wood, &c. &c., where it is conjectured that they have been accidentally inclosed during the formation of these substances. However strange this may appear, such stories have gained credit; and there was at Chillingham, in Northumberland, a chimney-piece with a hollow in the middle of it, wherein, it had been said, a living toad was found when the block of stone was first hewn. The counterpart, with the same mark, was used for a chimney-piece at Horton Castle, in the same county."

Henry. I think this could never be, father. How long can a toad live?

Ralph. I believe many of those animals which become torpid for a season, may exist a long time in that state, under circumstances that favour it, and yet be capable of animation under a change of circumstances. But I see our book continues the subject.

"Not only toads, but other reptiles, have been found living in situations that seemed to exclude the air. A few years ago, in Scotland, some people

at work penetrated a solid rock of whinstone: several feet below the surface they struck upon a small cavity, where there was a nest of living creatures of the lizard kind. No opening of any sort could be discovered where a breath of air could be admitted, or where these creatures could have entered, or afterwards been supplied with any nourishment, though the place was carefully examined. The poor reptiles soon died after being taken out, and exposed to the air and light.’*’

Henry. Trees may grow around any substance, which may thus become inclosed: but

* Since writing the above, I have met with an anecdote to the same purpose, as follows.

“A remarkable instance of animation prolonged for many years, without air or nourishment, was discovered on Thursday, the 25th ult. by Mr. Houghton, cabinet-maker, of Bury, Suffolk; who, by splitting a piece of elm, laid open a cavity about the size of a small walnut, containing a large beetle, which at first appeared in a torpid state, but on being placed in a warm room, soon after shewed signs of life. The cavity was situated nearly in the centre of the tree, and entirely surrounded by solid wood. The part of the tree where it was found had probably been inclosed, by the subsequent growth of not less than thirty or forty years.” *County Chronicle.*

stone, father, how does it grow, or how is it formed?

Ralph. Perhaps there may be some account of it in our book, and also of coal, which you know is found in the earth; but before we consult our book upon the formation of stone, I will relate some curious circumstances respecting the growth of trees, that have fallen under my own eyes. I recollect, when a child, an old oak that grew in a hedge near my father's house: it was decayed, and quite hollow within. Many a time my sisters and I used to climb to the top of the hollow, to examine a nest that a little bird had built there, and where she reared her young family. We used to shelter ourselves in this old tree when it rained, and take our porridge there to dine; so that it became quite a favourite spot with us. Well, in time this hollow filled up with sound wood; and, when I was last at my father's house, I saw a fine sound tree, instead of our old hollow oak, with just a scar remaining up one side, where the latest growth had taken place, and where the bark joined over it. I fancied this had been a singular instance of the kind; but, soon after, I happened to be assisting at the cutting down of a tree near a gentleman's house: it fell with a great crash, and split in the fall; when, to the astonishment of the beholders,

what think you was discovered in the heart of the tree ?

Henry. A toad, I suppose.

Peggy. Perhaps some playthings, such as you might have left in your tree.

Ralph. It was what some older children had left there, I believe. What do you think of a bottle of brandy, well corked up ?

Henry. Perhaps some people had a feast under the shade of the tree some fine summer day, and made a pantry of the hollow place.

Ralph. There were many conjectures about it ; but they are not worth repeating.

Henry. Such a cordial within might well make a spirited tree of it, and it might perform very vigorous exertions to be young again : but, can you tell us, father, how the wood grows in these hollow trees ? Does it grow from the bottom, like a young tree ?

Ralph. How the brandy tree grew, I had no opportunity of observing ; and I was too young

to pay due attention to our old oak. However, I have been rather curious on the subject; and, as it comes in the way of my business to observe trees, I some years ago remarked an old alder, that seemed to be decayed and hollow for a great length of time; and I observed, from a flourishing branch in the upper part of the tree, a sort of roots coming down, as if in search of the earth for nourishment. Mr. Nicholson and I have frequently visited it, and found that the roots crept down the hollow among the decayed wood, till they reached the ground; and there deriving nourishment, swelled, united, and became as the bole of the tree, filling up the great cavity, and displacing all the mouldering wood, till the whole is now very nearly like a solid tree. I will shew you the tree when we walk that way again.

Henry. I should like very much to see it. Now, pray tell me, father, how stone and coal grow in the earth; and how these toads and lizards could become surrounded with such a solid substance.

Ralph. I don't know that our book can explain that. I believe, it is an operation of nature, which has never yet been fully understood.

Peggy. O, there are a hundred things I should like to hear about, far better than stone and coal. Do let us read about the living creatures first; and particularly there is a picture in the book, of some curious looking beasts, sitting up, and begging like dogs. Here, only look, Henry!

Henry. O yes; this is the kangaroo, and those beavers; do look, father, how busy they are!

Ralph. Well, read what you please. These beavers are building houses: they are most sagacious, interesting creatures; but it is a very long article, and this evening is far spent. You will have time, however, to read of the kangaroo.

Henry took the book, and read.

“The kangaroo has a very curious appearance, resting on its hind legs, which are very long, while its fore legs are so short that they look like little arms, and it uses them mostly in digging, and conveying its food to its mouth, moving altogether on its hind legs, by making successive bounds of ten or twelve feet, with such rapidity as to outstrip the fleetest greyhound: it springs from rock to rock, and leaps over bushes eight feet high. This is the only quadruped our colo-

nists at New South Wales have discovered, that affords them animal food. It measures about six feet, from the point of the nose to the end of the tail, which is about two feet in length, very thick at top, but tapering to the end. The head of the kangaroo is small, and prettily formed; its ears large and erect; its fur short, soft, and of a reddish colour. It has no means of defence but in flight, bounding away from its enemies; and while its helpless young are incapable of such exertions, it is enabled to carry them with it in a pouch, with which Nature has provided it, and where it suckles them also. Here, they can run in and out at pleasure, and find safety under every alarm."

The children now closed their book; and, after their usual devotions, retired to rest.

FOURTH DAY.

WHEN the children first met their father in the morning, they reminded him that it was Innocent's Day. Peggy said she recollected it was that on which the young children in Bethlehem had been put to death by order of Herod. "But, father," added she, "pray tell me all the story; for I have forgotten why the king did this cruel thing."

Ralph then referred to his manuscript, and read as follows.

"Herod was of a very cruel, suspicious temper; and when he heard that the wise men from the east had seen the star which they expected to point out the time and the place of the birth of Christ, he was much troubled; fearing that this new-born king might deprive him of his crown. He therefore assembled the chief priests, and the scribes,

whose peculiar business it was to study and explain the Scriptures, and he demanded of them where Christ should be born. They said, certainly at Bethlehem, in Judea; for so it is written by the Prophet Micah. Then Herod privily enquired of the wise men, for exact information as to what time the star appeared. This he did, that he might make some conjecture about the age of Jesus. After the wise men had informed him of their observations upon the star, he sent them to Bethlehem, to make very diligent enquiries concerning this child, and to come and tell him, when they had found him; for he said, that he, too, would go and worship him. So they departed: the star moved on before them, till it stood over the place where the infant was. They then went into the house where the young child and his mother lodged, and fell down, and worshipped. They also, after the manner of their country, presented him with its choicest produce, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which treasures they had brought with them for a gift. After this, when, in obedience to Herod's commands, they were preparing to return to him, God warned them, in a dream, not to do so; for God knew Herod's wicked intentions. So these men went into their own country another way, without giving Herod any information.

“Herod, enraged at finding he was mocked of the wise men, immediately sent to have all the young children put to death that should be found in Bethlehem, and the neighbouring places; ordering that none should escape, from two years old and under. He calculated, from what the wise men had told him, that this order must include the destruction of Jesus; but God, who directs all things for the fulfilment of his will, provided for the safety of our Saviour. An angel appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying, *Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him.* (Matt. ii. 13.) So Joseph immediately arose, and took them, though in the night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there till the death of Herod, which happened some months after.

“By this persecution of Herod’s, and the means God took to prevent his wicked intentions, several of the prophecies were fulfilled concerning the birth of Christ; which afforded wonderful proofs that He was the promised Messiah, as you will see, by reading the Gospel, and comparing it with the prophets noted in the margin.”

Ralph then read as the reference directed.

Peggy. Have you no more to tell us about this, father ?

Ralph. This is just what I have collected upon the subject ; but you cannot do better than read in the Bible all that is related there.

Peggy. But, then, I shall be so long about it ; and so slow in finding all the parts relating to the subject, and the prophecies concerning it ; I like far better that you should tell me about it : I always think I know it better, than when I read it myself. Every time you tell me these histories, and indeed, I may say, every time I read the Bible too, I think I learn something new.

Ralph. You will probably always find it so ; for the Holy Scriptures afford a perpetual fund for knowledge, for hope, for consolation. May you, my children, derive all benefit from this blessed book : comfort on earth, and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

With this he dismissed them to prepare for church ; and in the evening, at an early hour, they had the picture of the beavers open before them, feeling a great curiosity to know how, and for what purpose, they constructed the causeys, or

dams, that were represented in the plate. Just as they were beginning to read, Mr. Nicholson came in to chat with Ralph. He was glad to see them so well amused with their book; and said, he should like to hear them read; and explain, or add, as he might be able, on any of the subjects of their curiosity. They then proceeded as follows.

“The beaver inhabits the most northern parts of Europe and Asia, but is most abundant in North America. It is an amphibious animal; that is, an animal which can live both in and out of water. Its hind feet only are webbed; it uses its fore feet like hands: its tail, which is very broad, thick, and scaly, it uses on several occasions, as will be described in this account. Beavers always make their habitations in the water. In the months of June and July, they assemble in large troops of two or three hundred, wherever they intend to build: if upon a lake of still, level water, it saves them much trouble; but, if upon a river, they first form a dam quite across it, frequently eighty or a hundred feet in length, for the double purpose of keeping the water nearly upon a level within their houses, and in order to intercept the fish, which is their principal food. This astonishing work for animals not more than four feet long, including a tail of one foot in length, is constructed with great

strength and firmness. They seem to have intelligence of each other's design; for they will divide, and take separate parts of the work, the more speedily to execute the general plan. Some cut down large trees, which they effect by gnawing them through about one or two feet above the root. This they perform with their fore teeth, which are remarkably strong. If the tree grows near the water, where they purpose commencing their work, they always contrive that it shall fall across the water, and there it forms the basis of their dam. Some set immediately to work, gnawing off the branches, to make the trunk lie level in the water; while others search the banks of the river for lesser trees, which they cut down in the same way, and divide into lengths, to suit their purpose for making piles. Having conveyed these materials to the water's edge, in their mouths and fore paws, they proceed by water to the dam they are constructing, and their tails serve as a rudder when swimming. Of the materials they have collected they next make a sort of pile-work, closely interwoven with small branches. Some dive to the bottom of the river to dig out holes wherein to place the pointed end of the piles, while others stand on the large trunk of the tree, to keep the piles perpendicular. They then prepare large quantities of mortar, working it up

with their feet and their broad tails. They next fill up the vacancies of their piling, making several rows of it.

“The dam, when finished, is a completely solid work, of the breadth of ten or twelve feet at bottom, tapering to the top, where it is not more than two or three feet broad, with the sloped side facing up the stream; thus wisely contrived to resist the weight and force of the water. At the top of the dam they make little hollows like spouts, sloping down the stream, to let off the water; and in case of its rising suddenly, and damaging their work, they instantly set about repairing it.

“The dams being finished, they next proceed to building their houses on the margin of the water, with two openings, one towards the land, the other towards the water, so that, whichever way their enemies approach, they have a ready retreat on either side. These houses are always built upon piles, with walls about two feet thick, and consisting of three stories, the first being below the level of the water, and the other two above it; the house generally rising about eight feet above water, and of the form of an oven, with a round top. They generally build from ten to twenty

houses, and some large enough to contain a family of twenty or twenty-five beavers. These habitations are formed of stones, wood, earth, clay, and other solid materials, all nicely plastered with mortar, for which work their tails serve as a mason's trowel. The insides of their houses are remarkably neat. They make their beds of moss, and every family lays up a store of winter provisions, such as bark, small branches, leaves, gum, &c."

"That must be very poor food," said Henry; "what a pity they cannot contrive to salt their fish for winter food, as we do our nice red herrings."

Mr. N. That would be a degree of sagacity beyond what is observed in any animal save man, who, a writer has remarked, is the only cooking animal. With all their sagacity, these beavers only use the implements with which nature has provided them in their own persons; man being the only creature who makes one thing, by which to make another, and has, therefore, also been distinguished as the tool-making animal. But let us return to the beavers.

"In these houses, neither rain nor wind can

hurt them: and here they remain all winter and spring, during which time they rear their young ones. Soon after the young are able to move about a little, all the males leave them to the care of their mothers, and go into the woods to enjoy the fine weather and the fresh food. When the young are able to follow, then their mothers go there also. The houses are thus deserted; but after floods, or when any injury is done to them, the beavers assemble in parties to repair them, and never fail to resort to them in winter. They are so fond of fish, that, even when the lakes are frozen, they will sometimes take little excursions under the ice, from that door of their house which opens under the water. It is their custom commonly to sit upright in the water, their upper part and fore paws being above it. Their colour is almost universally of a dark chestnut, but sometimes black, and, though very rarely, white; the fur remarkably thick, as is the case with all beasts inhabiting cold countries; a merciful provision by Him who provides for the wants of all. And it is observed, that the covering of those quadrupeds which are so constituted as to live in various climates, changes its quality to suit the warmth, or cold, of that climate where they happen to be placed. In this wonderful contrivance, we discern the goodness

of the Almighty, both to the beast, and to man also, enabling him to collect around him all those most valuable to him; so that wherever he is, whatever part of the world he inhabits, there also are to be found beasts suited to his purpose, beasts fit for labour, and fit for food. Man varies the quality of his dress to the climate. God varies the quality of the clothing of beasts: their fur thickens with the cold, and becomes a defence against it. In hot countries the wool of sheep becomes like thin hair, for there the wool would be oppressive. Bring sheep thus hairy from a warm country into England, and the cold gradually changes the hair to wool; and the breed, in its peculiarity, degenerates. The sheep, the goat, the horse, the cow, and the dog, of all creatures the most useful to man, will live comfortably in the greatest variety of climate; but more particularly that useful, faithful friend to man, his dog, a species of quadruped exhibiting the greatest variety, so that one kind or other will live wherever man exists, always bearing the same character of fidelity and usefulness, always assisting him in procuring prey, always obedient to his commands, always watching for his safety and his comfort. But once more to return to the beaver. Very wonderful stories have been related of him, shewing

his wisdom; but perhaps little credit is due to such stories. It is said, that one is usually elected by the rest for an overseer, who is to undertake the direction of all their works; and wherever he perceives help to be most wanted, he strikes the water with his broad tail, upon which summons a large party instantly repair to the spot to receive this honourable gentleman's order. It has also been asserted, that beavers will seize upon any unfortunate stranger, of their own kind, that comes among them, and keep him in slavery, making him carry earth and mortar for them, drag the wood, and do other such laborious offices: moreover, if any one is found in their society too lazy to work, that they will lay him upon his back, and make a sledge of him, on which they carry the materials they want.

“It is universally observed, that in all countries where the beaver is found in large societies, there are also solitary beavers, which some naturalists believe to be criminals under sentence of banishment. These beavers are easily distinguished from the others: they do not participate in any of their advantages; have no dams, no houses, no stores. Their fur looks dirty and rubbed. They burrow like the mole, and sometimes hollow out little ditches or ponds for them-

selves by the margins of lakes and rivers. It is much more probable that these solitary beavers should be another species, than that they should be banished criminals.

“In respect to every kind of animal, it requires a very intimate acquaintance with the species, to draw, from the facts we see, any accurate conclusion as to the motives of their conduct, or the plans upon which they act. But it is very evident from facts well ascertained, that the beaver is highly endowed with powers of providing for his comfort and safety; and that not only beavers, but all other animals, have some contrivance and means for protecting themselves from their enemies, from injuries arising from climate, and all other things hurtful to them; also for providing for the necessities of their helpless young, as well as if they were, like man, gifted with reason. What but the great Power that created them, could have endowed them with this useful knowledge, this unerring guide?”

“But surely, Mr. Nicholson,” exclaimed Henry, as he finished the history of the beaver, “these creatures are wiser than any I ever heard of! In regard to their own interest, wiser even than dogs!”

“Dogs,” replied Mr. Nicholson, “throw themselves entirely upon man for protection, for food, for shelter. All their ingenuity, all their powers, are exerted for man; and greatly is man benefited by this interchange: not only is he rewarded by the services of this faithful beast, but by his engaging affectionate manners. It is not an ordinary observer of the animal world who perceives the wisdom, the contrivance, the apparent good sense that most animals practise. Some species, no doubt, possess more than others, each being gifted according to its necessities. And besides that portion of instinct with which each is provided, as among men, so, among animals of the same species, we find different degrees of intellect. Those which we have the best opportunities of observing, those, too, whose wants and whose feelings come nearest to our own, exciting most our sympathy, and from these causes best comprehending us, are the animals we are apt to fancy the wisest. But it is probable, that if our knowledge was more extensive, we should not find all that difference we are led to imagine.”

“O, Mr. Nicholson,” replied Henry; “but dogs and horses! surely they are the wisest and the best!”

"We know them best," returned Mr. Nicholson, "and they best know us. Probably, also, by living so much with men, their intellect is cultivated to a greater degree than if they had been left in a wild state; and, through time, such improvement may have become hereditary, that is, descending from one generation to another. They learn something of confidence in man from their parents. Their powers are not always occupied with cares for their own safety, with providing for their own wants; nor are they scared by fear. Their faculties take a new turn, and they are certainly thus wiser than others."

Here this little family separated for the night, being more and more impressed with the goodness of God towards all his creatures, and the various means displayed to ensure their happiness.

FIFTH DAY.

THIS not being a Saint's Day, after the children had performed their morning devotions of prayers and hymns, Ralph said he would leave them to slide on the ice, or amuse themselves as they pleased, while he would take a walk to see some of his friends, and join them again in the afternoon. When they were playing, they saw little Margery Barnes coming towards them with something in her hand. They went to meet her, and found she had brought Peggy a present of a very pretty canary-bird in a cage; so they repaired to the house, and hung the cage on a nail near the kitchen-window. This bird was all over of a pretty yellow colour, and had a tuft of feathers upon its head. Peggy did not know how she could sufficiently thank Margery for this delightful present. She wished that she had possessed any thing worth offering in return, but she had nothing. She desired Margery to sit

down, and look at the pictures in the new book. Margery was charmed with the fine painted birds, some of which were of such gay and various colours, that she grew quite discontented with the more simple plumage of the canary, and wished he had been a parrot, a macaw, or any of those brilliant birds represented in the book.

“O!” said Peggy, “he is quite beautiful enough, and his form is so pretty, that I like him better than a macaw.”

While they were looking at him, he was hopping about his cage, quite reconciled to his new situation. The sun shone bright and warm upon him, and he soon entertained them with a song.

“O how charming is his song!” cried Peggy. “How I wish I had any thing to offer you in return, Margery, that I might give you as much pleasure as you have given me. I wish this book was all mine to give; but half of it belongs to Henry.”

“Indeed I am very happy to have it in my power to give you so much pleasure,” returned

Margery, "and I desire nothing more: but I must now wish you good-day, for my mother said I was to be at home before noon."

Henry and Peggy walked part of the way with her. The path lay through a wood, by the side of a river. There had been a shower of snow in the night, which had fallen so gently, that it lay sparkling upon every branch of the trees, crisped over with frost. They looked up among the boughs which closed above the path where they were walking, and thought the trees looked more beautiful than even when clothed with the green leaves of summer. There was such a stillness in the wood, that one might hear every little piece of hardened snow, as it fell from the boughs. They recollected, that the last time they had walked there, the wood resounded with the songs of birds.

"How much happier they are in summer!" said Margery. "Look, how cold and wretched they appear now, with their feathers all ruffled, and just creeping from tree to tree; every now and then holding up their poor little frozen feet."

At this moment, their attention was turned to some beautiful wild-ducks in the water.

“Now these birds seem to enjoy the cold,” said Henry. “I wonder how they can bear their feet so long in the water, but our book shews us, that, be the weather hot or cold, in all seasons, in all climates, in all places, there are creatures to be found that enjoy the weather, season, climate, and place; and, as Mr. Nicholson remarked, He that made the world, made also all that therein is; so that one thing is always suited to another, and each shall have its portion of enjoyment.”

As they walked on, a woodcock got up near their path, and flew across the water: it was near enough for them to see its long bill and its resemblance to the picture of the woodcock in their book. They determined that they would read about the birds in the evening. Margery wished much that she could join them at their reading-hour; but the days were so short she could not walk out so late. Henry and his sister said, they hoped, however, that, when summer should come, they might all read together; or, by that time, they could spare Margery the book to read at home.

“In the spring,” replied Margery, “I have to go fifty miles from this place, to stay a whole year with my aunt Hannah.”

Peggy was grieved to hear she was going so far off, and wished, more than ever, that Henry would allow her to give Margery the book; but she restrained herself from saying so at this time, and, soon after, leaving Margery to pursue her walk alone, she and her brother returned home. When their father came in, Peggy was eager to tell him of her new present, and of the pleasant walk they had through the wood. — “And we are going,” added she, “to read of birds to-night, father, and about the woodcock.”

“Perhaps,” replied Ralph, “the book may not say much about woodcocks; but let us have our supper first, and then we will read.” As soon as they had refreshed themselves with this meal, Henry took the book, and read as follows.

OF BIRDS.

“The very great variety of this interesting and beautiful part of the creation makes it impossible to notice many of even the more remarkable species, in a little volume like this. From the ostrich, equal in height to a man mounted on horseback, to the humming-bird, so small that its total length is not more than an inch and a quarter,

and its weight only twenty grains ; between these, the largest and the smallest of birds, we have of every intermediate size, of every form that can be imagined, and every colour, transposed with endless variety ; of such beauty, too, that it is impossible to tire of looking at them. The variety of their songs, also, affords another very interesting subject : and it is curious to observe, that where nature has been lavish of beauty, she has been sparing in the gift of song. In the hot countries, where their brilliancy of plumage is the most striking, there are but few songsters ; and it is remarked, that the groves are not, in any country, so full of music as in Great Britain, where, except the kingfisher, the jay, the pheasant, and the woodpecker, there are none remarkable for splendid plumage, and these are all totally deficient in song. The peacock, whose beauty is famed above that of all birds, is also famed for its frightful discordant voice ; but it is not originally a native of Great Britain, though, on account of its great beauty, it has with care been domesticated here, still, however, requiring attention to preserve it.

“ We observe birds fitted to every climate. Many of those inhabiting countries of very *variable* seasons, on some of these changes, make excur-

sions to other countries more suited to their feelings; and these are called birds of passage. Birds are fitted, not only to variety of climate, but variety of food; so that there may be found some convenient for them wherever they are. And it is invariably the case, that their bills, and all parts of their frame, are exactly and wisely contrived for the preservation and happiness of each, according to their habits and situation. There are birds of prey, with properties fitted to their purpose: these are generally swift to pursue, strong to hold, and have formidable talons or claws, and crooked beaks, to tear the flesh of their prey. The eagle is the largest and most noble of these birds; but very few of this species are to be seen in England now. There are still some in Scotland, but they are rare there also. Hawks and owls are also birds of prey: they are numerous, and their habits well known.

“Some of the lesser kinds feed upon flying insects, and some upon worms and creeping things; some upon fruits, grain, and seeds of all sorts, and some upon fish. Wherever their food is we observe them, sometimes darting through the higher regions of the air, sometimes skimming over the surface of the grass. Some of the smallest kind seem for ever on the wing; just

touching an instant the fresh grass or flowers, and flitting from one to the other, like butterflies: of this number is the little humming-bird, which feeds upon the honey of the flowers. Again, others are seen hopping among the bushes, hovering over the water, wading about the margins of lakes and streams, or diving beneath for fish and reptiles, among the stones and mud; so that, by the variety of their food, this beautiful and useful race of beings may be sustained all over the globe, themselves affording food for thousands, while they carry off that superfluity of insects which would otherwise overrun the earth, causing famine and many other evils. For all these purposes, their Almighty Creator has furnished them with suitable properties. The beak of those which live on grain, or hard seeds, is strong, with sharp points for breaking the hard covering of such seeds, which they dexterously put aside, while they secure the kernel. Some have very long bills, some very short, some slender, some strong, some broad, some formed like a saw, and some like a spoon. It would require a volume to notice all.

“There are birds which fly abroad by day; others pursue their prey by night. Examine the difference of their eyes. Again we repeat, the power and goodness of the Creator is visible in

all his works. Behold the eye of the eagle, formed to sustain the brightest light; and behold that of the owl, formed for night, and dazzled by the light of day.

“How curious, also, is the formation of their feathers! variable in quality, according to the wants of each species, yet all calculated for defence against the weather, and for lightness in flight; calculated, in short, to produce the comfort of the creature they adorn.

“Look at the quills, or feathers, of the wings and tail. They are strong to resist the air in flight; yet what can be lighter and more compact, on each side the stem, than the feather which is composed of small thread-like portions? These, when carefully examined, are found to be furnished with a set of very small hooks along the edge, by which they are clasped together so firmly, that they are not easily separated by any pressure in that direction in which they have to encounter the air; and if, by any force in a contrary direction, they happen to be ruffled, they will readily unite again, when gently brought together by the bill of the bird, smoothing them from the bottom up to the tapering point. Yet there is no glutinous fluid used in this operation

to unite them: they catch of themselves, like the latch of a door; and all is again in order to resist the wet, and fly abroad.

“The feathers of water-fowls, especially, are of a very soft and close texture, particularly adapted to turn off the wet. They are bedded upon a very warm down, and well supplied with a natural oil, which prevents the bird being either wet or cold, and which it has the power of distributing over its feathers at will. Many of those species which are more than commonly exposed to cold, though not water-fowls, have their feathers bedded upon soft down; and this down is frequently black, that being the warmest colour.

“Hérons, cormorants, and several of the fishing-birds, have their middle claw notched like a saw, to assist them in holding their slippery prey. The swimmers are web-footed; the divers have their legs placed very far back; the waders have long, bare legs: and most of them long bills, which they thrust into the mud for food. Those kinds, whose food fails them in winter, when every thing is frozen, generally emigrate to a warmer country, or remain torpid without requiring food, till the dreary season passes away. We see many birds in Great Britain during the winter, which, coming

from a more northern clime in search of food, leave us again in the spring: of this kind is the woodcock, which at different seasons is said to inhabit every clime. They keep dropping in upon our shores, from the beginning of October till December. They are first found near the coast, in a state as if fatigued with a long flight. As soon as recruited, they seek out suitable situations, such as moors, marshes, and woody glens, wherever they can find unfrozen mossy rills, or oozing springs of water. The latter end of March and April, they draw to the coasts again, and leave us the first fair wind, for more suitable climes than our islands afford at that season. These birds are known to frequent the same spot for several winters, having been caught and marked by the curious."

Henry. Then the long bill of the woodcock is, I suppose, for penetrating the soft ground near the springs of water, where it finds convenient food.

While Henry was speaking, the door opened, and they were glad to see Mr. Nicholson walk in. He desired them to pursue their studies, and not make any interruption on his account.

Henry. We have just been reading about the woodcock. The next article is the swallow.

“The swallow is another bird of passage. We see these birds only during the summer months. Flies are their food, and they do not come here till flies abound: when these perish in September, the swallows leave us again, after being hospitably indulged with the use of our chimneys, and of the eaves of our houses, where they are sheltered from the wet.”

Peggy. And what very pretty nests they build! I wonder they are not mentioned.

Mr. N. I think, it does not much signify, as you know them so well. I dare say, you could give me a description of them.

Peggy. Indeed I could: they are all nicely plastered over with clay, and I have seen the young birds in them. O how I love swallows! But it would be cruel to keep one for a pet, because it could not live here in winter. Jack Barnes has often tried to keep one, but every one died a miserable death; and I am sure that would have made me very unhappy.

Mr. N. Certainly; to be the cause of suffering, must give pain to every reflecting, feeling mind. But I can tell you a curious circumstance of a

swallow that was tamed by some children. I read of it a little while ago.

Both Henry and his sister begged to hear it; and Mr. Nicholson related as follows.

“A young swallow, nearly fledged, fell from the nest down a chimney, in a house where there was a family of children, who succeeded in rearing him. He was soon able to fly; and the children took him abroad in the fields, and wherever they went, and taught him to fly from one to the other at the call of a whistle. He was left at full liberty, yet constantly returned to their call, in spite of the attempts made by other swallows to seduce him away. They would even flock round him, endeavouring to drive him away, whenever they saw him going to alight upon any of the children, which he used frequently to do uncalled, when they were walking abroad. When the children were within doors, so, generally, was the swallow too; usually sitting on their hands or heads, and always roosting on one of their heads, till bedtime, with his head under his wing, though the child moved about. At night he always roosted in their room. He soon learned to feed himself; for which purpose he was often shut out of the house, that he might feel himself more dependent on his

own exertions: and he became very dexterous in catching flies, both within doors and without. For about six weeks he continued thus tame; but, by being left much to himself, he gradually ceased to come at the call of his young friends, though he always acknowledged them by a chirp, or by flying near them: and at the time when swallows leave this country, they totally lost sight of him, which gave them great satisfaction, as they then knew that they had reared him for his own happiness. Had they attempted to detain him, or had they not rendered him independent, by teaching him to feed himself, they would no doubt have been punished for their want of kindness, by seeing their little favourite die a miserable death."

Peggy. But it was very hard to lose him, after all the trouble they had had in rearing him.

Mr. N. It was a charitable act on their part, and they had the pleasure of seeing their intention fulfilled. Where was the hardship?

Peggy. But I should have wished to have kept him always, for the pleasure of loving him, and seeing his gratitude.

Mr. N. Then you would have procured a cruel

and selfish indulgence, at the expence of the little being you professed to foster and love. When we purpose being of service to another, we should not look for any other reward than the pleasure of accomplishing the service we intend. The gratitude and affection that naturally and generally are returned for friendly services, cannot always be continued by actual proofs, without forfeiting the benefit which was intended.

Henry. Shall I read to you about the cuckoo, now, Peggy?

Peggy. O yes; let us hear about the cuckoo. Have you any stories about cuckoos, Mr. Nicholson?

Mr. N. Let us first hear what is said in the book.

Henry reads.

“The cuckoo is another of our most favourite birds of passage, for its coming announces to us the arrival of spring. It is very curious in its habits, making no nest, but depositing its eggs in the nest of another bird, which, it is said, turns out some of her own eggs, so that not often more than

one or two are hatched with the young cuckoo, and those which are hatched are then turned out by the young cuckoo, which is brought up by the stranger bird. It seldom happens that there is more than one in a nest."

Peggy. O how I wish I could find a young cuckoo in the nest! I never saw this bird near enough to admire it.

"And how do you know that you should admire it?" enquired Henry. "Perhaps it is an ugly thing!"

Mr. N. By no means. I have frequently seen both old and young cuckoos. When old Ned Blade was mowing my orchard last year, he set his foot upon a young cuckoo, and killed it. It was fully fledged, and a beautiful bird it was: so prettily mottled, and so clean and fresh it looked; and its beautiful clean feet, that had never been soiled, were different from those of birds in general, having two toes forward and two backward. Not that this is peculiar to the cuckoo: woodpeckers, and a few others, have the same formation. Then, the inside of its mouth was also very remarkable, being entirely of a brilliant red colour, like the brightest sealing-wax.

Peggy. And what kind of a nest was it in ?

Mr. N. It had no nest, only a little hollow just fitted to its size, scratched out in the grass after the manner of a common hen ; and whether hatched by the old cuckoo, or not, I had no opportunity of observing.

Henry. What a pity that it was killed ! you might have kept it, and discovered where it went, at the season all cuckoos leave us.

Mr. N. If I had kept it confined, it could not have emigrated ; and if I had given it liberty, I could not have followed it in its flight. I have heard it conjectured, that they remain in this country, but in a state of torpor : and under this supposition, some people have detained them ; and, with great difficulty, a few have been preserved over the winter. But it was a cruelty that did not lead to any discovery.

Peggy. But, Mr. Nicholson, did you ever find any other cuckoo-nest ?

Mr. N. I have found eggs, one at a time, in such a situation as I have described ; but never could ascertain what became of them. One, I

myself put into a hedge-sparrow's nest, and two days after, found it alone there, although there were three sparrow's eggs in the nest when I put it among them. And once I found a small hedge-nest, with a single young bird which filled the nest. I took this to be a young cuckoo; but it was killed by a cat, before sufficiently fledged for me to ascertain what bird it was. It was brown and mottled. So you see I have made no discoveries.

Peggy. Well, now do let us read about the different nests of birds. I should like to know the nest of every bird.

Mr. N. It is very amusing, my dear, to observe the great variety of nests we have in our own little island; but it would require a large book to describe all the nests of all the birds that are in the known world. There are many that you must be pretty well acquainted with, besides that of the swallow. There is the heavy nest of the magpie, covered in at the top, and lined so smoothly for the young. There is the cushat's nest of loose sticks, so carelessly made, that you may see the eggs through it. You must, also, know the nest of the thrush, the blackbird, the lark, and many others?

“ Yes,” said both the children, “ we know these, and the eggs of all common birds. What we want to read of, are the nests of those which are more rare, and inhabit foreign climes. But first, what kind of a nest does an owl make ?” enquired Peggy.

Mr. N. An owl seldom makes any nest, but in the rudest manner. Most owls lay their eggs in the hollows of old trees, or in snug places among ruins, or holes in the walls, or hollows and sheltered spots in rocks, and other places of difficult access.

Henry. Now what is it that inclines the magpie to make a strong nest, which shelters and hides her eggs from every eye, while the owl makes scarcely any nest at all ?

Mr. N. It is only by observing the circumstances in which animals are placed, their constitutions, their enemies, and all relating to them, that we can see the utility of their habits ; and then we may discern the kindness of Providence in directing them to that which is best for them. The owl’s careless nest, perhaps, shews that she has nothing to fear for her young ; that the snug hole she chooses guards them sufficiently from

the weather, and from enemies. Some animals, however, are by nature more careless, and more numerous in their generation, than others: one cause thus acting against another, but every thing tending to the good of the whole, as well as to the preservation of every distinct kind, and every thing proving to man, *That there is a God, infinitely wise, powerful, and good*, providing for the happiness of all that he has created.

“Surely,” exclaimed Ralph, “one may say with the Psalmist, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.*” (Psalm civ. 24.)

As the evening was now far advanced, Mr. Nicholson turned to those passages which described the nests of birds, and, after observing, that almost all nests are composed of such materials as from their colour and texture are best calculated for concealment, he read to them the description of that made by the bald-coot, a curious-looking bird, frequenting the lakes and meres in various parts of England. “It builds its nest among the tall reeds which grow in these meres, fixing it there by weaving the materials of which it is made round the stems and long leaves of these reeds, in such a manner that it rests upon the top

of the water. And so nicely is this nest constructed, that, without being detached from the reeds, in rainy seasons it will rise with the swelling, and sink with the retiring water, still resting unhurt on its surface."

"What but Providence could have taught a simple bird to preserve its nest in such a precarious element!" said Ralph; "and had all birds built their nests in the same manner, how few would ever have been reared!"

Peggy. I do like this about the nests very much. Do read us some more, Mr. Nicholson.

Mr. N. Here is a description of the nest of the titmouse.

Henry begged to be allowed to read, and took the book.

"That which is most curious, in the account of the titmouse, is the manner in which she constructs her little nest. For this she uses the light down that succeeds the blossoms of the willow, (commonly called the palms,) or of any other of the downy plants. With her bill she weaves this into a thick mass, almost like a piece of cloth.

She then interweaves with it, in order to strengthen it, the small fibres and roots of plants: after all, lining the inside with more of the soft down, not matted or woven together, but laid in quite smooth, for the young to lie upon. And that they may be warm and dry, she closes her nest in at the top, and hangs it, by the fibres of hemp or nettles, in the cleft of a light waving branch that gently rocks it over some running stream, so that the old bird may be near her food, which consists of those insects that live in and near the water. She has also another, and perhaps a more important reason, for hanging her nest near the extremity of these light branches, in the preservation it secures to it, from water-rats, snakes, and other vermin.

“In India, where monkeys and snakes are great enemies to birds in the nest, there are many which build these kinds of hanging-nests: some in the shape of a purse, some with a hole in the side. Others, still more cautious, make the entrance at the very bottom, and form the bed for the young at the upper part within. But the tailor-bird, more careful than all, and enabled by her light weight to succeed in her design, builds her nest, not only at the extremity of the finest twig, but even fixes it to the leaf itself. She sews a loose

leaf to the side of one growing at the end of a branch : her small bill answers for a needle, and the fine fibre of some plant for the thread. The lining of the nest is composed of feathers, down, and spiders' webs. Yet slight as this nest is, and slightly as it is fixed to the leaf, this little bird, weighing less than a quarter of an ounce, sits securely upon its little eggs."

When Henry had finished this account of birds' nests, Mr. Nicholson arose, and wished them all good night. The children begged that he would come to their reading again the next night, and every night during the Christmas holidays ; for their father had given them leave to read every evening while the holidays lasted.

"And that will be twelve nights," said Henry. "And many thanks to you, good Mr. Nicholson, for the pleasure you have given us."

Mr. Nicholson promised to come as often as he could spare time.

When he was gone, "This is indeed," said Henry, "delightful reading. I wish this book had been ten times as big as it is ; I am sure I should never be tired of reading it."

“Nor should I,” added Peggy.

“No reflecting mind,” said Ralph, “can ever tire of contemplating the wonders of the creation. The book of nature is a perpetual study for man, a perpetual source of delight, calling forth adoration and gratitude, and preparing his heart to submit itself to the all-wise and all-merciful God, in every dispensation of his Providence.

Henry. Surely, God best knows what is good for us. I only wish I could give some proof of my purpose to serve him. After all, father, though I like our book so much, I would far rather read the history of some of the martyrs, than any history in the world. Where can I get a book to tell me of the martyrs?

Ralph. I don't know, unless you like to read of the martyrs which suffered in Queen Mary's time; for we have the History of England.

Henry. In Queen Mary's time, father! Who was it made the Christians suffer then?

Ralph. The queen made them suffer. She was a papist, and dreaded the establishment of the protestant church; so ordered those who de-

fended it, to be tied to a stake, and burned, thinking that by this cruelty she was doing religion a service.

Henry. O, let me read about it! Did they suffer like St. Stephen? Let me have the book this very night, father.

Ralph. No, it is bed-time now; and you had better finish the book you are reading, before you begin another. But we will have no more reading to-night. It is very late.

Henry. But I may have time, during the holidays, to read a little to myself in the mornings, and finish our new book in the evenings with you and Peggy.

Ralph. Well, we will see how far that may be convenient; but let us go to bed now.

As the children were putting by their book, and preparing for bed, Peggy said, "Now, Henry, as you are going to read a book that you like so much, may I give Margery our own book after the holidays?"

"No, indeed," replied Henry, "I can't think of

it. What! the book that Mr. Nicholson was so good as to give us! And we shall not have finished it by that time. Besides, I shall read it over and over again."

Peggy saw that her request would be made in vain at this moment; though she had hoped that the history of the martyrs might have caused Henry to be indifferent about what she coveted so much for Margery. She said no more, and they went to bed.

SIXTH DAY.

AFTER Henry had retired to bed, and when he awoke in the morning, he gave his thoughts entirely to the subject of martyrdom. He was captivated by that greatness of mind shewn by those pious sufferers, who, rather than deny their faith, had endured exquisite torments. He believed, that if such a trial awaited him, he could acquit himself with as much resolution as any that had ever died at the stake : he almost persuaded himself, that he wished for an opportunity of thus gaining a crown of glory.

After the children had said their prayers with their father, and finished their breakfast, Henry was going to take down the History of England from the shelf ; but Ralph said, that he should be obliged to employ him upon an errand that morning, for though he did not ask his children to work during the holidays, he had a message of

consequence to send to one of his employers : and he promised, that in the evening they should, as usual, read the book of natural history, and hoped Mr. Nicholson would join their party. Henry was sadly vexed at being thus put off his favourite pursuit, and much out of humour with his father, for being the cause of his disappointment.

“ And why cannot Peggy go, instead of me ?” said he, rather pertly.

Ralph. Because it is more proper that you should go.

Henry. But you often tell me to read, and to read books that will instruct me ; and, by the example of wise and good men, improve my mind : and now that I want to read, you will not let me.

Ralph. There is a time for all things, Henry ; and if you have not learned from your books that it is your duty to obey your father, you have not profited by your reading as you ought to have done. Moreover, it is not for people who have to work for their bread, to be reading all day long : they have “ to learn and labour to get their own living, and to do their duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call them.”

Henry. True, father; I will obey you. I am sorry that I have been inclined to break these great commandments.

While Henry was speaking, Mr. Nicholson came in, but, seeing something was the matter, did not advance, saying, that he was going to pray with old Margaret Brown, (Ralph's aunt, who had been bedridden for two years,) and he had called to ask whether they had any commands.

"Henry is going that way, though somewhat further," replied Ralph; "and I shall be glad to have him walk with you."

Ralph was indeed always glad to have his children with one so good as Mr. Nicholson, and so well inclined to improve their minds.

While Mr. Nicholson and Henry were walking together, Henry still continued in a gloomy mood, reflecting upon his late conversation with his father; and though Mr. Nicholson had twice spoken to him, he remained silent, not heeding what was said.

"What ails you, Henry, this morning?" enquired Mr. Nicholson, very good-naturedly.

“ I scarcely know,” returned Henry, ashamed at his own conduct. “ I have been talking to my father about martyrs, and I want to read about them ; I want to know how they conducted themselves at their trials, how they endured their torments, glorying in their sufferings and death, for the sake of Christ who died for them.”

Henry spoke this with such animation, that Mr. Nicholson asked him whether he thought that he could have died, like a martyr, for the cause of religion.

“ Surely I could,” replied Henry. “ I should now glory in the opportunity, if it should please God to favour me with such a trial of my constancy.”

Mr. N. What ! do you think that you would not shrink from torture ? Could you bear to be consumed in the flames, when a few words would release you, and place your body in ease and security ?

Henry. A few base words ! No torments should wring from *my* tongue words that would dishonour me, and leave me to a disgraceful life of wretchedness and remorse, instead of a glorious

and happy death, with the prospect of eternal reward.

Mr. N. May neither pleasure allure nor pain drive you from the path of rectitude, my good boy! It is the Christian's duty to follow that path, through whatever difficulties it may lead. But how did this conversation affect you in the way I observed at meeting you?

Henry. Because I wanted to read of the deaths of some of these great men this morning, and my father would not let me, but sent me on this message to Mr. Dobson's.

Mr. N. Well, and that put you out of humour. You knew it was your duty to obey your father; and yet, merely the desire to read about these martyrs a few hours, or perhaps days, sooner than was convenient to him, and consistent with your duty to do, appears to you a great and unreasonable sacrifice. If the love of God and of his commandments be not strong enough in your mind to overrule the desire of a little pleasure, how do you think you could, for the love of him and religion, brave the greatest pains? How little do you know yourself, Henry, or what you could do! It is not the love of God, it is the love of worldly

fame, that fills your breast. Learn humility, and love, and patience, before you think of martyrdom.

Henry felt sadly abashed; but after a little time, wishing to justify himself to Mr. Nicholson, he had recourse to the same argument he before used to his father, of the futility of which he was already convinced. Yet he said, "I am sure my father often bids me get my books, and read something that will afford me instruction; and I thought it hard, when I was inclined to read, that he should refuse me. But he has shewn me, that he was right; though I should like to read all day long, and be as wise as any gentleman in the kingdom. Why has my father been at all the expence of teaching me, if I am not to use my talent like other scholars? There is Richard Jopling, the shoemaker, and Ned Brand, the blacksmith; they can talk away with Mr. Goodenough, the schoolmaster, like any gentleman in the land. They know all the History of England, and about all the wars, and the parliaments, and the laws. O, I like to hear them talk!

Mr. N. Perhaps they do not *know* much, though they *talk* much, Henry; and not after the manner of those who have had the education of gentlemen.

Your father has given you a little scholarship, as we call it, for a better purpose than to be talking of things you don't understand.

Henry. But then I want to understand them.

Mr. N. Then you must give not only days, but years, to study. You must have the leisure that riches purchase. It is a great blessing to a poor man, and a labouring man, to be able to read, and thereby improve his mind, learn his duty, and fill his leisure hours with delight: but this, like all other good things, may be abused, so as to bring a curse, instead of a blessing. Our duties must accord with our station in life. The labouring people have very little leisure for reading; neither can they afford to buy books. The little they do read is apt to puff them up with imaginary knowledge. They soon grow wise in their own conceit, and quite unlike the humble Psalmist, who said, *I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me.* (Psalm cxxxi. 2.) It is well that all Christians should be taught to read; but those whose duty it is to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, should use the little time they have, in reading that which is most important to them to know. *They* have precious souls to be saved, as well as kings, and princes, and governors.

In the Holy Bible they will learn how to employ their time to the best advantage ; they will learn the true use of life. They who possess a Bible may be quite indifferent about all other books.

Henry. Surely, there are other good and useful books ; or why did you give us that on natural history ?

Mr. N. There are many other good and useful books, which will afford you both amusement and instruction, when other duties do not engage you ; and by reading them, you will return to the Bible with increased delight. Every book that teaches you to see God in his works, that increases your desire to serve him, that strengthens your resolutions to act according to his commandments, that makes you in charity with all mankind, doing all the good in your power, is a book worth reading at all convenient seasons ; and, by so doing, your time is profitably spent, in the service of your great Master.

Henry. Then why do gentlemen, who have nothing to do, read so many other books, if such only as you mention are useful ?

Mr. N. Gentlemen, who think they have no-

thing to do, are no example for us. Every man has enough to do, if he does all in his power; and the higher the station he occupies, so much the more important is his conduct, as far as the consequences affect mankind. He therefore has much to do, much to study and reflect upon, before he can act right. The greatest and the wisest men have ever found the study of the Bible the most valuable of all studies. Yet the part they are born to fill on earth must not be neglected, any more than the poor man's trade, and they must read such books as will teach them how to perform that part in the best way. Let every man mind his own business. What confusion, what disorder, we should have in the world, if every man was to aim at the knowledge of every kind of work!—if the shoemaker was to neglect his own business, in studying how palaces, and churches, and bridges, are built! if the collier was to try his hand at the silk-weaver's loom! if, when the poor man was working for the rich, the rich should be neglecting to regulate and enforce the laws that secure to the poor man the wages he has earned with so much toil!

Henry. Very right; it is best that every body should mind their own business, and what suits their station: and I have heard George Brewster,

the rector's butler, say, that two of his former masters, very learned men, had so much to do, that he thought any servant in the house might have more time to amuse themselves than they. But there must be many gentlemen who have nothing to do but amuse themselves.

Mr. N. If such there be, they live to no good purpose, either for their own souls, or the benefit of their fellow-creatures. They are like the drones in your father's hives.

Henry. And what a shame, as I have heard Ned Brand saying, that a rich lazy drone of a man should have thousands to waste just upon himself, while there are so many poor people wanting!

Mr. N. No doubt there are abuses in every department, in every class of people. But, after all, what the rich man wastes, the poor pick up. He can only rob us of the food he consumes; for, except that, all which is prepared for him goes to feed others. His land grows as much corn as the land of other and better men; his money is spent among the industrious tradesmen; and when he dies, he cannot take any thing away with him.

Henry. Such a man, I suppose, he was, at whose

gates lay the poor Lazarus, and such will be his lot hereafter.

Mr. N. We have but too much reason to fear that such an one is in danger of that sentence, *Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things.* (Luke xvi. 25.) But, *to his own master he standeth or falleth.* (Romans xiv. 4.) He who gave him riches, will judge him as to the use he makes of them. Let every one use the talent that is given him, so as to ensure his Lord's approbation: so may he hear those delightful words, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* (Matthew xxv. 21.)

After some little time had elapsed, Henry said, "But still, I wish I had been born to riches, that I might have been a great scholar; that it might have been my business to have read all sorts of books."

Mr. N. I shall give you the remark of an excellent man,* whose works I often read: "What availeth knowledge, without the fear of God?"

* Jeremy Taylor.

A humble, ignorant man, is better than a proud scholar, who studies natural things, and knows not himself. Many get no profit by their labour, because they contend for knowledge, rather than a holy life: and the time shall come, when it shall more avail to have subdued one lust, than to have known all mysteries."

Mr. Nicholson and his young companion now arrived at the house where Ralph's aunt lived, and Henry went in, just to see her, and to ask her how she did. He then left Mr. Nicholson there, and proceeded on his errand, reflecting on all that had passed. When he got home, he made a point of proving, by his behaviour, that he was sensible of his fault committed in the morning; and he joined with great cheerfulness in the evening reading. They chose the subject which related to fishes, and began to read of whales, the first living creatures mentioned at the creation. (Gen. i. 21.)

"The largest whales are found about Greenland, or Spitzbergen. These are from seventy to ninety feet in length; and if they remain undisturbed, and have time to grow, they are said to reach the length of one hundred and sixty feet. They are chiefly found among the ice, where they have deep water, and sometimes many leagues from

shore. Their fat being an essential article of trade, ships are sent out every year from England to take them. The fishing begins in May, and continues all June and July: at any rate, the ships must get clear of the ice before the end of August, or they would be all lost in the frozen seas. The manner of taking these fish is as follows."

"But first, let me see the picture," cried Peggy. "Oh, what an ugly thing it is! Is that water, which it is spouting out so high?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Nicholson, who entered just as they were examining the picture. "I have seen a whale. It has two holes in its head, through which it spouts water to a great height, and with a great noise. Its hearing, at other times so quick that no enemy can approach it unperceived, is, when making this noise, of little use to its safety: and it is then the fishers approach to strike it. I have heard many interesting stories of the affectionate disposition of this creature, some of which I will relate afterwards. But I will not interrupt your reading, so go on."

Peggy. O! pray tell us *now*. How does it shew this affection? I suppose, for its young?

Mr. N. Yes, I have a brother in the Greenland trade, and he told me, that he had frequently seen, when the female suckling her young has been wounded, that she, clasping it to her, plunges to the bottom with it, to avoid danger; but rises again sooner than usual to give it air, knowing that it will require it more than herself, and risking the repetition of a wound, rather than incur certain destruction to her young. When I was at Hull a few years ago, a strong instance of this attachment occurred. A ship came in with a young whale on board, which had been killed in a very distant sea: yet its anxious unhappy mother had followed the ship all the way to England, and arrived there with it, braving her own danger. The avarice of man was such, that this tender mother's attachment cost her her life.

Ralph. Nay, Mr. Nicholson, you should not be so severe upon man. Who knows but this man secured the lives, or at least the comfort, of his family, for some months, by the death of the whale! People who have to make their living must not be over scrupulous about the lives of the poor dumb things.

Mr. N. Perhaps, by investigating their feelings and habits, we learn to sympathize too much

with them. Yet, it is well to know enough of their nature to make us spare them all unnecessary suffering. He who adds one unnecessary pang to the sufferings of the brute creation, is certainly guilty of the heinous crime of cruelty.

Ralph. I agree with you, Sir. It is a bad heart that does not wish to give pleasure, and hate to give pain: and when the heart is well inclined, much may be done that is kind, and much omitted that is cruel, in the treatment of brutes.

Henry. But, at least, I would have killed that poor whale immediately after the death of her young one, that she might have been spared that anxious pursuit.

Ralph. Probably the ship could not take her in, and the experienced fishers knew that their prize was as certain by the ties of nature, as if they had her on board.

Henry. Must I read on? I want to know the method of taking whales.

Peggy. But, Mr. Nicholson, have you not some more stories of the tenderness of these great fishes?

Mr. N. None, but what shew the same disposition, and bring on the same fatal end.

Peggy. Just tell me one more, and then Henry may read; for I know he is very impatient to hear how they manage to kill such enormous fishes.

Mr. N. Then I will just mention one more instance, that I once read of; which was, of some fishers having struck one of two whales which were seen together in the water. The wounded fish made a long and terrible resistance. By a single blow of its tail it struck down a boat with three men in it, by which all went to the bottom. The other whale attended its companion, lending it every assistance, till at last, the fish that was struck sunk under the number of its wounds, while its faithful companion, disdaining to survive, with dreadful bellowings stretched itself upon the dead fish, and shared its fate.

Peggy. Oh, how shocking! I don't wish to hear any more. Pray, Henry, read on.

Henry then continued the history of the whale-fishery.

“ As soon as the fishermen hear the whale

blow, they cry out, ' Fall! fall!' and every ship gets out its longboat, in each of which there are generally six or seven men. They row till they come pretty near the whale. The harpooner then strikes it with his harpoon, which is a kind of barbed spear, having, attached to one end, a long rope that lies coiled up in the boat. As soon as he is struck, they take care to give him plenty of rope, otherwise he would sink the boat; for he frequently goes down into deep water. He also draws the rope with such violence, that, if the men did not take care to have it well watered, it would, by friction against the side of the boat, be soon set on fire. The man at the helm observes which way the rope goes, and steers the boat accordingly; for the whale darts away with such rapidity, that he would soon upset the boat, if the line were not kept straight. When the rope or line slackens, it is a sign that the wounded fish is losing strength. They then gently pull the rope, and coil it, so that the whale may easily have it again, if he recovers strength; taking care, however, not to give him too much, lest he should entangle it about a rock, and pull out the harpoon. Fat whales do not sink immediately on their death, but lean ones do, and come up some days afterwards. After they are dead, the first operation is taking off the fat and whiskers; the whale

being lashed alongside. They lay it on one side, and put two ropes round it, one at the head, the other near the tail, which, together with the fins, are struck off. On the off-side of the whale are two boats, to receive the pieces of fat, utensils, and men, that might otherwise fall into the water on that side. These precautions being taken, three or four men, with irons at their feet to prevent slipping, get upon the whale, and begin to cut out pieces of about three feet thick, and eight long, which are hauled up by a windlass. When the fat is all cut off, they cut the whiskers from the upper jaw with an axe, first being firmly lashed, to keep them from falling into the sea. When all the fat, &c. is secured in the ship, the carcass is turned adrift, and devoured by the bears, which are very fond of it, and are frequently seen in great numbers in the frozen seas."

Peggy. O! I should like to read about bears!

Henry. But we are reading about fishes now. Don't let us go from one thing to another.

Ralph. Is there no more about whales?

Henry. Yes; but Peggy will interrupt me.
"The fat is all cut into small pieces, and carefully

picked from the lean. It is then stowed in the ship, and brought home, where it is boiled, and melted down into trainoil." Now, Mr. Nicholson, what must we read about next? Mention what may be most entertaining.

Mr. Nicholson took the book, and turned to the gymnotus, or electrical eel.

"The gymnotus is generally three or four feet in length, of a dark colour, and thicker, in proportion to its length, than a common eel. It is found in the hot climates of Africa and America, in the large rivers. It has the extraordinary power of giving an electrical shock to any person, or number of persons joining hands. When the fish are first caught, this power is stronger than it is afterwards. The same feeling is experienced through the medium of a metal rod, communicating with the fish. It is by this electrical shock that they stupify their prey, and in that state swallow it. They have no teeth, and, without this contrivance, might have found it difficult to secure it. After the gymnotus is dead, the body still retains this singular property for a considerable time."

Peggy. I don't understand what is meant by an electrical shock.

Mr. N. It resembles, in a slight degree, a stroke of lightning; and there are some instances where the shock of the gymnotus has proved fatal, but only when it is of a very large size.

Peggy. I don't yet understand what sort of a feeling this shock is, as I never was struck by lightning.

Mr. N. You would rather acquire at an easier rate, the knowledge you seek, I do suppose; but it is not easy to describe to one whose feelings have had so little range. Had you ever a blow on the small bone in your elbow, and did it not cause a sort of numbness to your fingers' ends?

Peggy. O yes; I know what you mean now.

Mr. N. Well, we have no more here of the gymnotus; but we find accounts of fishes which exhibit a bright glow of light about them, of flying-fish, of migrating-fish, and of shell-fish.

Henry. What are migrating-fish? Do they change their climate like birds of passage?

Mr. N. They frequently come in shoals into

shallow water at the spawning-time, and then retreat to the depths again; but, of those that may be said to migrate, the most remarkable, or, at least, the most important to our island, is the herring; and I see there is some account of it; so, if you choose, we will read of it.

Peggy. O! I would far rather have something about the flying-fish, unless we have time for both.

Mr. N. I think we have. I will read what is related of the herring, and then you may read of the flying-fish yourself, which seems but a short account.

“Herrings are so called from a German word, meaning an army, and which well expresses the immense multitudes of these fishes. After wintering in the northern seas, where insect food abounds fully to the extent of their enormous demands, the herrings direct their course, in the spring, towards the south. In April, they are generally seen off the isles of Shetland.”

Henry. Whereabouts are the Shetland Isles?

Ralph. Get out the map of the world, Henry,

and look to the north of Scotland, and you will see them.

Mr. N. He will not see them clearly in a map on so small a scale. Have you not a map of Great Britain?

Ralph. No, Sir. We have but one map; but that takes in the whole world; so it is best for those who cannot afford more: then one sees how one place lies by another. These are the Shetlands, you see, Henry. The name of each cannot, I fear, be mentioned in a map that has to contain so much besides.

Henry. Well, that will do, father. I only wanted to know how far they are off us.

Mr. Nicholson then continued to read.

“The progress of the herrings is marked by the flocks of birds which accompany them, and prey upon them. There are, in general, several columns of this mighty host, extending about five miles in length, and three in breadth; and they come so near the surface of the water, as to cast a fine pearly lustre, and variety of colour, which, in clear weather, is very beautiful. From the

isles of Scotland they divide to the eastern and western shores of Great Britain. In the former case, passing through the English Channel; in the latter, visiting the coast of Ireland, and furnishing cheap and good food to the inhabitants."

Henry. See, father, I am following their track on the map.

Mr. N. (in continuation.) "Some naturalists suppose, that in winter they shelter themselves in the profound retreats of the ocean, among the mud, near those shores where they are first seen in the summer. But, on the other hand, it is well known, that they afford abundance of food, not only to man and birds, but to many fishes also; and that their most formidable enemies are the whales, which thin their columns with the most destructive havock: and whales are only found in the frozen climes."

Peggy. Now, if you please, let me read of the flying-fishes. I suppose they have wings?

Mr. N. Only fins, which answer the purpose of wings in their short flights.

Peggy. I thought they were almost like birds!

Mr. N. They seem to be like animals that unite the qualities of birds and fishes; as the bat, the flying opossum, and some others, form a link connecting birds and beasts. The ourang-outang, or great ape, is the connecting medium of man and beast, and the animal plants, such as the sea anemone, the vegetable lamb, and some others, form the gradation between animals and vegetables.

Peggy. Animal plants, Mr. Nicholson! I never heard of such things! I would rather read of them than of any thing else!

Henry. I think there is no end to new things. I should like to read all day long.

Ralph. Reading is a delightful improvement to the mind. What a sin it is, and how strange it is, that so many who have been blessed with education should waste that time they might spend in reading; and not only waste it upon unprofitable things, but even in frequenting alehouses, and in other sinful practices!

Henry. I hope I shall never do that, father; but I am afraid I may be tempted to read, when I ought to be working for my bread.

Ralph. Leisure for reading is one of the greatest blessings attending the rich.

“Ay,” said Mr. Nicholson, “and that it is which enables them to exercise the highest and most important offices. Working-people never can have time and opportunity, as I was telling Henry this morning, for acquiring much information; and they often fancy they know all, when they know next to nothing. The more they really know, the more plainly they perceive their general ignorance. A writer, who was himself a very learned man, has said, ‘The same thing happens to truly wise men, as to spikes of wheat: they go on, at first, setting themselves proudly up, and, as long as their heads are empty, they carry them high; but in maturity, when their heads are filled with valuable matter, they lower their lofty carriage, and humbly bend their heads.’”

“Now, here is little Peggy, quite surprised that there should be such things as plants partaking of the nature of animals, and that she should never have heard of them. So it is with us all: knowledge shews us our ignorance. I have read a good deal, and am more and more convinced, that those who have only a very little time for reading must just keep to those things which concern

themselves; what relates to assisting them in making an honest livelihood, and what assists them in fitting their souls for a happy futurity. Among those who can read, there are, I trust, very few indeed who cannot find time for the improvement of their minds in these respects. In this happy country, where the poor man's property is as safely guarded as that of the rich;—where high and low, rich and poor, are under the same law;—where schools abound for children, who could not otherwise be taught;—where every family has, or may have, a Bible;—in this happy country, where *the poor have the Gospel preached unto them*;—it must, indeed, be a man's own fault, if he does not fully share with the rich the future hopes, and the present consolations, that our blessed Saviour came in all humility to bestow upon man. The poor man's soul is as precious in the sight of God as that of the greatest potentate on earth; and when our few short years of life come to an end, *he is the richest who has laid up his treasures where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.*" (Matt. vi. 20.)

Peggy. Well, I hope we shall all have time to learn the right road to heaven. I am sure, at least, that it does me good to read of the works of

God, who has been so merciful to all. As long as the holidays last, we may read, father says, throughout the long evenings—twelve winter evenings! and this is only the sixth. We have yet to read of plants, shells, dogs, (long stories about them, I see,) all sorts of beasts, metals, precious stones, and loadstones.

Mr. N. You have many very entertaining subjects yet to come; but I thought you wanted to read about flying-fish at present. Let us finish with that to-night, and then choose what you like for to-morrow.

Peggy took the book, and read as follows.

“Flying-fish have the pectoral, or breast fins, very large, which, to a certain degree, give the power of flight. We shall particularly notice the Mediterranean flying-fish, which is about fourteen inches in length, and can support a flight for the distance of eighty or a hundred yards; after which it is obliged to dip in the water to moisten its fins, or they would become hard and dry; for which reason it does not often rise more than three or four yards above the water. These fish are frequently observed in shoals, and, when on the wing, appear somewhat like swallows. The air-bladder

of flying-fish being extremely large, is a great assistance to them in flight. They have enemies in the air, among the birds, and enemies in the water among the fishes, and occasionally become a prey to the one or the other; yet they have the means of eluding each, by taking refuge in that element where the pursuer cannot follow. When pursued, they frequently fly on board a ship, but are seldom treated with much hospitality there.”*

“ Now,” said Mr. Nicholson, “ I must wish you good night; but as you take so much interest in my little Christmas gift, it will give me pleasure to come again to-morrow night, and read it with you. After to-morrow, I shall be too much engaged to pay you another visit before the holidays end, and then you will have finished the book.”

All expressed great concern in the prospect of losing Mr. Nicholson’s assistance; and, wishing him good night, separated to take their rest.

* When they fly on board a ship, it is accidental, or they would avoid the sails, against which they strike, and falling on deck, are devoured by the sailors, thus proving that they have a third species of enemy.

SEVENTH DAY.

ON this morning, after the children had prayed, and read their usual portion of Scripture, Ralph Brown told Peggy that she was to go and see her old aunt, and stay till the afternoon, taking care to come home before day-light should be quite gone. "And," added Ralph, "Henry may read of the martyrs in Queen Mary's time, from this History. Here, Henry, you will read of men, who, convinced that many errors had gradually been adopted by the Roman Catholic church, abjured those errors, and became members of the Reformed, or Protestant Church, which is now established as the Church of England, but which, at that time, was opposed by Queen Mary, who adhered to papacy. You will here read, how these great men suffered torments and death, rather than consent to make professions against their consciences. Encouraged, too, by the hope, that, dying in support of their faith, they would be the means of establish-

ing a purer worship, more conformable to the doctrines of our holy Redeemer's first disciples, they suffered with a zealous and almost joyful heart."

Henry was delighted that he had obtained leave to read this morning; and his father soon after going out, to take a walk with Mr. Nicholson, he was left alone with his book. He read, with the deepest interest, of the dreadful persecution of the protestants, and the sad history of poor Bishop Hooper, who, refusing an offer of pardon, rather than change his religion, was tied to a stake and burnt by piecemeal, insomuch that one of his arms dropped off before he expired. While Henry was reading this shocking history, intently given to his subject, a sudden tap at the door made him start up, and in came John Barnes, quite out of breath. "I have run all the way," said he: "my uncle Palmer wants to see the parson immediately; and I thought, if you would be so good as to step on to Mr. Nicholson's for me, I could just stop here five minutes, and take a look at this new book, that my sister Margery talks so much about."

"Is your uncle ill?" enquired Henry.

"Yes," replied John, "he has been ill for more

than a week ; and aunt Nanny says, she hopes, if he gets over this attack, he may become a new man, for he has thought much of the idle life he has led, and the contempt he used to have for religion, and now says, he must have some conversation with Mr. Nicholson, without loss of time. And, as neither he nor aunt Nanny can read, they said, I was to beg our good parson would go as soon as he had an hour to spare : for when the pains take hold upon my poor uncle, he can listen neither to reading nor talking ; so now that he is a little bit easy, is the time to see the parson."

"You need not hurry just at present," said Henry ; "for Mr. Nicholson is gone out with my father, and will be in presently."

"Which way did they go ?" enquired Jack.

"I did not observe," returned Henry, looking for the book to shew John ; but he found that his father had taken away the key of the cupboard where the book lay. "But you can stay till father comes in, cannot you ?"

"I fear I have not time," answered John. "I am much wanted at home ; so I will leave my message at Mr. Nicholson's, and hasten home again."

“ You need not go to Mr. Nicholson’s,” said Henry. “ He will probably come in with my father, and I will tell him your message.”

“ And if he does not come,” replied John, “ will you be sure to go with it to his house ?”

“ Certainly, I will,” returned Henry ; “ so you may take your time.”

“ Thank you,” replied Jack ; “ for, quick as I came, I dare say they will think I have been a long time. Be sure you don’t forget, Henry.”

“ No, trust me for that,” said Henry. “ I am glad to hear that Robert Palmer is likely to mend his manners. Poor Nanny will be quite happy at the thoughts of it.”

“ Ay, if he lives,” said John ; “ but he is very bad. Pray remember my message, Henry ; for who knows but poor uncle’s salvation depends upon it !”

“ Don’t fear me,” returned Henry, once more : and Jack went home.

Henry took up his book again, and read of

Rogers, a popular preacher, and many others, who submitted to be burned, rather than accept life upon the offered terms. All Henry's admiration of martyrdom was enthusiastically bestowed upon these men, as he read of their zeal for the reformed religion: and he continued wholly absorbed in his subject, as he read of Dr. Taylor, vicar of Hadleigh, an old reverend ecclesiastic, who ventured to oppose some Romish priests celebrating mass in his church. Upon this, Taylor was sent for to London, and reviled with the most opprobrious names, and after being detained a few days in prison, he was tried, and condemned to be sent back to Hadleigh, and there to be burned. He was fixed in a barrel of pitch. One of the spectators flung a faggot at the good old man, which wounded him so that his face was covered with blood. "Oh, friend," said he, "I have harm enough: what needed that?" When he repeated a psalm in English, one of the guards struck him on the mouth, and bade him speak Latin. While employed in prayer, another cleft his head with a halbert, in such a manner that his brains came out, and he expired.

Henry also read of a poor weaver, who was tortured to death in the most horrid manner, because he rejected the Romish faith; also, young apprentices, ignorant fishermen, peasants, women, per-

sons of quality, worth, character,—all sorts of people, were sacrificed without distinction.

The bishops Latimer and Ridley were convicted and condemned, though pardons were offered to them, if they would recant. When they were brought to the stake before Baliol College, Ridley said to his fellow-sufferer, "Be of good heart, brother; for God will either assuage the flame, or enable us to abide it." And Latimer consoled him, in his turn, saying, "We shall this day light such a candle in England, as I trust, by God's grace, shall never be put out." Thus suffered two bishops, remarkable for their goodness. Gardiner, a person who had been active in bringing them to condemnation, was so eager for their death, that he would not dine, on the day of their suffering, until he received news that it was all over. The same day he was seized with a fatal disorder. His last moments were afflicted with remorse; and he called out, "I have sinned with Peter, but I have not wept with Peter." Such a death might have deterred others from persecution; but the zeal of the papists was not moderated, and in the year 1555 sixty-seven persons were burned on account of religion, including four bishops and thirteen priests. It has been computed, that, in these times, two hundred and seventy-seven persons suffered.

Astonishing as this may appear, it is much inferior to what has been practised in other countries.

In the midst of the display of so much fortitude, there were, however, a few melancholy instances of human frailty prevailing over well-disposed minds; and history does not furnish us with examples more calculated to call forth our compassion than were exhibited by Sir Anthony Cheke and Archbishop Cranmer.

Sir Anthony was for a long period very unfortunate, and, when prisoner in the Tower, the awful alternative, "Comply or burn," was laid before him. Under these circumstances, human frailty prevailed; and, in an evil hour, this champion of light and learning was tempted to subscribe his false assent to the whole list of Romish articles. This was but the beginning of humiliations: he was now required to pronounce two ample recantations, one before the queen in person, the other before Cardinal Pole, who also imposed upon him various acts of penance. Even this did not immediately procure his liberation from prison; and while he was obliged, in public, to applaud the mercy of his enemies in terms of the most abject submission, he bewailed, in private, with abundance of bitter tears, their cruelty, and, still more,

his own criminal compliance. The savage zealots knew not how to set bounds to their triumph over a man whom learning, and acknowledged talents, and honourable employments, had rendered so considerable. Even when, at length, he was set free, and flattered himself that he had drained to the dregs his cup of bitterness, he discovered that the masterpiece of barbarity was yet in store. He was required, as evidence of the sincerity of his conversion, and a token of his complete restoration to royal favour, to take his seat on the bench, and assist at the condemnation of his brother protestants. The unhappy man did not refuse, but it broke his heart. At last, retiring to the house of an old friend, whose door was opened to him in Christian charity, he there ended, in a few months, his miserable life—a prey to shame, remorse, and melancholy. How were the sufferings of this wretched man prolonged by his weak conduct! How often must he have envied those whom he had condemned to death, and who bravely perished, rather than they would purchase a life of shame and remorse, such as he dragged on, in the paltry hope that the world would give him credit for a change of sentiments that he did not feel; though he could not but know, that, by such cowardly falsehood, he must be unfavourably regarded by that God “to whom all hearts are

open." It was under this painful knowledge, that he lingered in mental torments, till his worn-out body yielded to mortality.

The melancholy history of Archbishop Cranmer is not less interesting to the feelings of compassion. He also was condemned for heresy. But just as Henry was beginning to read this story, he happened to look up, and saw his father and Mr. Nicholson crossing over a field at a little distance, and going towards Mr. Nicholson's house. He thought of the message he had engaged to deliver, but, being extremely desirous to know how poor Cranmer had allowed himself to be overcome in his severe trial, he thought he might just read it over before he should go. It is true, he felt some little scruple of conscience, and well he might, considering the importance of the case, and the uncertainty of poor Bob Palmer's life; but his eagerness to be acquainted with Cranmer's history prevailed, and he read as follows.

"Brooks, bishop of Gloucester, as the pope's sub-delegate, together with two commissioners from the king and queen, had condemned Cranmer, at Oxford, for heresy. Bonner and Thirleby were sent thither to degrade that prelate. He was

clothed, in derision, with pontifical robes of coarse canvass ; and Bonner, having insulted him with the most indecent raillery, ordered him to be stripped of his ludicrous attire, according to the ceremony of degradation used in the church of Rome. Thirleby wept bitterly during the whole scene, protesting to Cranmer that this was the most sorrowful action of his whole life, and that nothing but the peremptory command of the queen could induce him to be present at the affliction and distress of a person with whom he had lived in the most perfect friendship. After the archbishop's condemnation, a great number of divines, both English and Spanish, assailed him in different shapes. They threatened and soothed him, by turns. They flattered him with a promise of pardon. And, at length, falsehood and art prevailed over the infirmities of nature : he renounced his religion, acknowledged the pope's authority, and all the articles of the Romish faith.

“ His recantation was immediately printed, and afforded the popish party matter for great triumph, while the protestants were overwhelmed with sorrow and shame. The queen, who, under the expectation of his being burned for a heretic, pretended to have forgiven him for crimes he was accused of against her, as his sovereign, was now

disappointed, and signed a warrant for his execution. So this poor man, who had just purchased, as he thought, his life, at the expence of his conscience, found that he must die upon another account. He was conducted to St. Mary's church, and put in a very conspicuous place during the sermon, which was to set forth his conversion as the immediate work of inspiration, by which he was flattered with hopes of heaven.

Poor Cranmer, inwardly condemning himself, expressed the greatest anxiety and distress, lifting up his eyes to heaven, shedding a torrent of tears, and groaning with unutterable anguish. When he was desired to declare his faith, he prayed, with the most pathetic expressions of horror and remorse. Exhorting the people, he repeated the Apostles' Creed, declared his belief of the Scriptures, and confessed that he had signed a paper contrary to his conscience, from the apprehension of death; for which reason, the hand that subscribed the recantation should first feel the torture of the fire. He renounced the pope, as the enemy of Christ, and professed the same opinion of the Sacrament as that which he had published in a book written on that subject. The papists, who hoped to triumph in this man's last words, were greatly incensed at this declaration. They called

to him, to leave off dissembling, and, pulling him down, led him to the stake at which Latimer and Ridley had suffered. When the fire was kindled, he stretched forth his right hand to the flames, in which he held it till it was entirely consumed, exclaiming from time to time, "That unworthy hand!" After shewing great piety and undaunted courage, his body was at last consumed; but, among the ashes his heart was found entire. After this, whole troops were sent to the stake, without distinction of age or sex: mothers and daughters, and even infants. The surprising resolution with which the martyrs suffered, diffused a general notion of their sanctity, and enhanced the merit of their religion; but, as the protestants increased, Mary became more cruel.

"A man of the name of Bainbridge, unable to bear the torture, cried out aloud, 'I recant—I recant!' The sheriff immediately ordered the fire to be extinguished, and Bainbridge signed a recantation: but the Court sent an order to burn this unhappy wretch; and the sheriff was committed to prison."

"Surely," thought Henry, "those who perished without shrinking from their trial, suffered less, even in body, than most of those who recanted."

The brave would soon embrace everlasting happiness. The cowards forfeited that prospect: and for what? For a short life of wretchedness. What fools, not to bear an hour's pain!"

Poor Henry had not the means of reflecting upon that state of mind which is oftentimes brought on by long-continued suspense and fear; nor had he ever experienced the effects of extreme pain. Thus, while he dwelt with admiration upon the wonderful fortitude of those who suffered without shrinking from the avowal of their faith, his censure fell, unmixed with charity and tenderness, upon those unfortunate instances of want of resolution. He still continued reading, and was still intent upon his melancholy subject, when his father entered, saying, "Well, Henry, have you been gratified with your studies this morning?"

Henry. O yes, father, yes. Those who perished nobly, will be admired as long as the world endures!

Ralph. That is of little consequence to them now.

Henry. But will they not be rewarded in heaven?

Ralph. That certainly concerns them far more; and it was a well-grounded hope, no doubt, which supported them, and not for their own happiness alone: they trusted to be the means of encouraging others to admire and adopt a religion that had such zealous and faithful followers; and a great blessing, indeed, it has proved to this kingdom, though it was established in the midst of so much opposing cruelty.

Henry. I wonder what could make the queen so cruel!

Ralph. It is but too frequently the case with those who are bigoted to their own opinion, that, in their zeal to support it, they lose sight of all the Christian virtues. When this persecuting spirit prevails in religious matters, it may generally commence in a zealous desire to promote the true service of God; but opposition calling forth the pride of the human heart, the persecutors are led on by Satan, to conduct themselves in a manner quite contrary to the true spirit of the Gospel, to that gentle spirit of love and charity in which the apostles followed the example, and taught the doctrines, of their great Master. Both bigotry and power were united in Mary; and when she found *that* power still insufficient to change the hearts

of men, she commanded, in her pride, that such men should be compelled by torture to belie their consciences, or expire under it. This was done also as a means of deterring others from presuming to use their own judgment. Shall our blessed Saviour have brought into the world the glad tidings of the Gospel, and shall we not all read it? O, my child, what a blessing it is to be taught to read the Bible in our own tongue! and to have learned men in our churches to expound to us those passages, which we might find it difficult to understand! These are surely the days when *the poor have the Gospel preached to them.* (Matt. xi. 5.)

Henry. I am sure I am very glad that I have been taught to read. I hope I shall make a good use of my knowledge; but still I think, father, it was an easier way by which the martyrs would get to heaven, than that which we must try.

Ralph. Easier do you think, Henry? You must observe, that even some great, and good, and learned men failed, through the insupportable anguish their tormentors inflicted.

“True, father,” returned Henry: “but some lads of nineteen and under, mere peasants and

apprentices, braved it out ; and I feel certain that I could have borne any thing rather than have flinched. Why, it was only a few hours' pain ; whereas, to be always watching over ourselves, to be always bearing and forbearing, and mortifying ourselves, is far harder to perform with persevering care, than a good burn, and then to finish."

Ralph. Nay, Henry, but do you think these people could have been martyrs, if they had not previously practised mortifications and severities of various kinds ? The spirit that leads to martyrdom cannot be generated in a day, without it be through the immediate inspiration of God.

Henry. I should like to read more of the first martyrs, and the first reformers.

Ralph. We will endeavour to get the lives of some of them. To read of such, ought to give one a noble feeling, and a stedfast faith ; while the failures of the well-intentioned, ought to inspire us with humility, and guard us from over-rating our own powers.

Reading, reflecting, and conversing upon this subject, kept Henry's mind deeply impressed with it all day, till Peggy came home to tell them of all

that she had been about, and how old Margaret had sat up in bed tolerably cheerful, and had sent her nephew Ralph a pair of stockings of her own knitting, which she had finished after being in hand for many weeks. "She took them out of a nice box," said Peggy, "made of pasteboard, and covered with paper; and there was a picture upon the lid: she made it when she was not much older than I am now; and she says, that the next time I go to see her, she will shew me how to make one like it. I then can make one for little Margery: but I have no picture to put on it!"

"It will do very well without a picture, Peggy," said her father.

"It *must* do without," thought Peggy, "if I cannot get one." Yet the wish to procure such a pleasing ornament occupied her thoughts frequently during the evening. But she had not been long at home, when it became very dark and stormy, and they were glad to shut out the cold, and light their lamp, being eager to fix upon a subject for perusal in their book. Ralph recommended that concerning hemp and flax, and began to read as follows.

"Hemp is an annual, or plant that grows only

from the seed, and lasts one season. The management of it requires considerable attention, as divers operations, such as pulling, watering, beating, and swingling, belong to it. It should be sown in May, in a rich, warm, sandy soil. We frequently import hemp from Russia. The best is soft, clean, tender, and of a long staple: the colour a pale yellow. It is chiefly used in the making of sails, cordage, strong low-priced linen for labouring people, and huckaback for towels and table-cloths."

Henry. Are the great ropes which one sees among shipping, made of hemp?

Ralph. Certainly; all sorts of cordage. From the fibre of this tender plant, first, thread is formed; these threads are twined into packthread, which is again twined into rope, and ropes into cables, such as hold the largest ships at anchor in a storm.

Peggy. I wonder how any body thought of contriving a thing of such strength from so weak a substance!

Ralph. There are many contrivances that might make wiser folks than you wonder; but you shall

hear of flax and cotton. "Flax is an excellent commodity. It will thrive in any sound land; but that which has lain in fallow is best. The finest seed is brought from the east, and should be sown about the end of March, two bushels to the acre. The flax is strongest and whitest when pulled in the bloom. The process of dressing it is somewhat tedious, and does not come within the limits of this book; but it may be interesting to know that the finest linen is made from this plant. The best flax will make very fine holland, running at least five yards in the pound.

"Cotton grows in the West and East Indies. It is a shrub that requires a very hot climate. The cotton wool is found, in this plant, surrounding the seeds, and inclosed with them in a large pod, something like the beech mast. It is pulled out, spun, and afterwards woven, as thread is, into webs, for wearing-apparel."

When Ralph had read thus far, the door opened, and Mr. Nicholson came in, rubbing his hands, and saying that he had seldom been out in a bitterer blast.

The moment Henry saw Mr. Nicholson, his conscience smote him. He recollected his promise to

John, which he had not thought of since the time when he had indulged himself in reading of the martyrs, and when he ought to have gone with the message to Mr. Nicholson, as he certainly had intended as soon as he should have finished his interesting history. But he had sinfully incurred the risk of forgetfulness on a very important subject, and now felt how wrongly he had acted. He was ashamed that Mr. Nicholson and his father should know what he had done. He sought in his mind for excuses to justify himself in their eyes, and, finding none, he grew every minute more and more unwilling to own his fault.—“Perhaps Bob Palmer will be asleep at this time for the night,” said he to himself; “and this will be a terrible night for poor Mr. Nicholson to walk two miles: and, no doubt, to-morrow will do as well. I will say nothing about it till the morning, and then I will contrive so that none shall know of my neglect.”

All this passed in Henry's guilty mind while Mr. Nicholson was warming himself at the fire, who now turned round to the table, and seated himself, saying, “I pity those poor people who are obliged to be out on such an evening as this. Let us be thankful that we may innocently indulge ourselves with our book over a good fire. What is the subject that engages you this evening?”

Peggy. We have been reading of some useful plants. But I want much to hear of the plants that move, as if alive.

Mr. N. There are plants possessing very different degrees of this power, so that one can scarcely say where the distinction lies between the vegetable life and something of the sensibility of animal life. Some flowers will blow so rapidly, that one may see them advance from the bud to the full-blown flowers in the course of a few minutes. Such are those which open at stated times, as the evening primrose, which I have in my own garden till late in the autumn. As soon as the sun declines, I have perceived the bud swell; and the calix, or green cup inclosing the flower, bursts asunder at sunset; and in a very few minutes a large white flower is rapidly unfolded, which remains all night; but as soon as the sun rises, it withers up, never to open again. It is the same with the night-blowing cereus, and many others. But here, (turning over the leaves of the book, and preparing to read,) here we have the sunflower, which, unlike those I have mentioned, always turns to the sun; and though it remains in full blow for many days, is observed to turn towards the east in the morning, and towards the west in the evening, as if unwilling to lose sight

of that power by which it exists. Some plants open their tender flowers only when the sun shines, and close them, not only during the night, but when the weather is cold, or the atmosphere damp; the same flower opening and closing again many times before it withers away. Of this kind is the spring crocus, the daisy, and many besides. Other flowers there are, which do not regard the rising or the setting sun, or whether the day be cloudy or bright, but have their stated times for opening, some for one day, others for many days, continuing to open and close at the same stated hours; and many of these are common field-flowers. So certain are they to their hour, that an ingenious writer proposed a garden of them, where there should be such an assemblage as that one should blow at each hour of the day, and so form a clock.

Peggy. How very curious that would be! Have you ever observed any, Mr. Nicholson, that did blow always at the same hour?

Mr. N. Yes; I have seen the marvel-of-Peru in our rector's hothouse; and it always opened at four o'clock in the afternoon. I saw it repeatedly.

Peggy. But what field-flowers do so?

Mr. N. I have read of several: for instance, the dandelion, the mouse-ear hawkweed, the lettuce, the goatsbeard, some kinds of lilies, some kinds of poppies, mallows, pimpnel, convolvulus, and many others. But I cannot say I ever saw these, so apt are we to overlook things daily presented to our view; while our attention is easily attracted towards a foreign rarity, without much reference to its intrinsic merit.

Peggy. O! I will watch them when summer comes again! But do tell me about the plants which seem to have animal life.

Mr. Nicholson gave Peggy the book, desiring her to look for them; and, while she was turning over the leaves, he took out his pencil, and wrote for her the following lines.

“ The child of God looks round to see
His Father’s work in all that grows;
To him, each flower of herb and tree
Conveys some lesson, as it blows.

“ Fresh glittering from the morning dew,
Ere day its course has well begun,
The dandelion first we view
With golden rays salute the sun.

“The yellow lily of a day
Sends grateful incense o’er the meads,
And from the dawn to twilight grey,
To us an hourly lesson reads.

“And then, at night, like one who prays
Unseen by all, save God in heaven,
Some purer flower its heart displays,
As cereus, and the rose of even.

“When thus we see these simple flowers
Make due returns for bliss imparted,
Let us for prayer have stated hours,
Sweet incense of the grateful-hearted.”

Peggy thanked Mr. Nicholson for the verses, and said they would often be the means of raising her thoughts to heaven, when she should be walking out, and looking at the flowers. Then putting the book into Mr. Nicholson’s hands, she said she wished him to read about the aloe, of which there was a picture that called off her attention for the present from the animal plants.

Mr. N. Well, I hope, Peggy, if you make the flowers a subject for your imitation, that you will, at least, except this insensible aloe, which is said to receive the influence of a hundred summer suns, before its gratitude expands in blossom.

Ralph. But if it be long of being perfected, it is a noble flower when it does come, and not the flower of a day. It makes ample amends for its tardiness. Let us hear about it.

“ The great American aloe flowers upon a stem between twenty and thirty feet in height, branching out on every side, so as to form a kind of pyramid. The flowers are of a greenish yellow, and come out in thick clusters at every joint. Even in England, if the plant be protected from cold, there will be a succession of flowers for three months. It has been generally believed, that this plant does not flower till it is a hundred years old, and that it only flowers once in a hundred years ; but this depends upon the growth of the plant, which is so quick in hot countries, that it will flower in a few years ; but in colder climates it is very long before the stem shoots up. There was a plant of this kind shewn at Bath in the year 1809. Its height was such, that, in order to see the flowers, there was a stand erected towards the upper part of the flowering stem, which came through an opening made for it in the boards ; so the spectators passed easily up and down the stairs to examine the flowers, which were perhaps more curious than beautiful, and from their variety attracted much company.

“Another of the American aloes, called the childing aloe, from its producing young plants after the flowers, is also well worth notice. Plants of this sort rarely grow more than three feet high, though the flower-stem rises near twenty, and branches out like the preceding, but more horizontally; the flowers are also of a similar form; but, after they are past, instead of seed-vessels, young plants succeed to every flower, so that all the branches are closely beset with them. There was a plant of this kind flowered in the Chelsea gardens, in the year 1755. The flowering stem began to shoot in October; and in the spring following, when the flowers dropped off, they were succeeded by young plants, which, as they fell off, dropped into pots prepared to receive them, where they put out roots, and became good plants. This sort does not produce offsets from the roots, so can only be increased when it flowers. It dies very soon after the young plants fall.”

They next read of the sensitive-plant, which Mr. Nicholson mentioned as having frequently seen, and bore testimony to the accuracy of the account, a circumstance always satisfactory to the children, as he could answer many questions they were desirous of asking.

“ The sensitive-plant bears a small, delicate leaf, and a pink flower. The leaf shrinks from the slightest touch. When touched more roughly, it instantly drops, as if by a hinge placed where it issues from the stem. At the same moment, and with equal rapidity, the two sides of the leaf close together. In a little time, when all is still, it gradually unfolds again. This may be repeated over and over again; the plant requiring a longer time to unfold, in proportion as it becomes weakened by these attacks on its delicate frame.

“ The sea-anemone is one of those plants partaking of the nature of an animal as well as of a plant. It is found growing to the rocks, within reach of the tide. At low water, it looks like a round lump of dark red jelly, almost the colour of blood. When the tide flows over the plant, it gradually opens like a beautiful flower of divers colours, particularly blue and purple. It is of a very thick substance, and has somewhat the appearance of being set round with rows of coloured beads. It shrinks from the touch; the flower closing up again into the round lump of jelly. It may be carefully detached from the rock, and, under proper management, may be rendered a healthy and interesting inhabitant of the garden or greenhouse; as it will blow in water.

“Next to these animal plants may be ranked the polypes, the lowest species of animals, which, in a contracted state, have also the appearance of jelly; but are capable of expansion, and spread out rays, or arms, by which they can perform a progressive motion, and can ascend or descend at pleasure upon the aquatic plants, or upon the sides of any vessel in which they are kept. By these extended arms they also secure their prey, which consists of such insects and worms as come within their reach. The young ones grow from the sides of the old ones, and there assume the perfect figure of small polypes, which in time separate from the parent. They may also be propagated by cutting them into two or three parts, each part in a short time becoming a perfect resemblance of the one so divided, in the same manner as slips cut from a plant sometimes become perfect plants, producing flowers and fruits. And, what is still more surprising, these polypes may, like fruit trees, be grafted together: the head of one may be fixed to the body of another, and the compound animal thus produced will grow, eat, and multiply, as if it had never been divided; exhibiting, in its properties, a most wonderful connexion with both the vegetable and the animal world. By what an almost imperceptible gradation is one member of the vast creation distinguished from another!”

Peggy's mind soon reverting to the pretty plants described by Mr. Nicholson, she said, "I should very much like to be allowed to go into the rector's greenhouse to see the plants there; particularly that sensitive plant, which shrinks from the touch. Could you beg leave for me, Mr. Nicholson?"

Mr. N. I am sure I can manage that for you. It will also give you great pleasure to see some of the garden-flowers.

Peggy. Are there any there that appear to move as with life?

Mr. N. There is a plant called catchfly, the leaves of which are armed with long teeth, and lie spread upon the ground around the stem, and are so singularly alive to intrusion, that if an insect creeps upon them, they immediately fold up, and crush it.

Peggy. And what can be the use of that?

Mr. N. Some have supposed the plant endowed with this quality to supply itself with nourishment; but others are more inclined to believe it a mode of preservation from the injury such in-

sects might do it. There are many plants, as you may read in this book, which have a power of protecting themselves from injury. "There is one called the fly-eater, by which, when the flies are endeavouring to extract the honey, they are taken in a snare. Other plants have other modes of defence: some are armed with stings, like the nettle; some with prickles, like the holly, which, while it is a low shrub, is well armed against the browsing of the cattle, for, being of a very slow growth, it could never otherwise recover the injuries they would do it, so as to attain the size of a tree. When it rises above the reach of cattle, we see its leaves smooth, without prickles. The gooseberry, the bramble, and some other low shrubs, are also armed for their defence. These bear fruit, and could ill be spared. Most of the common shrubs, bearing fruit for the sustenance of birds during winter, are defended by thorns or prickles. The hawthorn, the blackthorn, the brier-rose, and the holly, all afford food for birds. The woodbine, and some other berry-bearing plants, climb a great height before they flower in the hedges, and are by them defended till out of reach of injury; so that, in general, there is a means contrived, whereby the berries are preserved, both for food and for the propagation of the plant.

All the time that the book engaged Mr. Nicholson, Ralph, and Peggy, with so much interest, poor Henry was so distressed in mind at his neglect of John's important message, and at the disgrace he might incur by such neglect, that he could not give his attention to any thing else. He was forming a plan of going early in the morning to explain to John how it had happened, and to request that he would not expose him in the affair. After this, he purposed delivering the message to Mr. Nicholson, so that he might visit Bob Palmer before church-time. He had just got this arranged in his mind as Mr. Nicholson finished the subject of the berry-bearing plants, and was turning over the leaf, when the door burst open, and, to Henry's inexpressible horror, in rushed John Barnes, impatient for a moment's shelter from the storm. "There is an end to my plan now," thought Henry: "and what can I say for myself?" He waited in silence, sickening with fear.

John soon communicated his business, adding, that symptoms of an approaching attack had made his poor uncle so anxiously impatient for Mr. Nicholson's arrival, that Aunt Nanny, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, had sent him once more to learn how Mr. Nicholson was engaged, and when they might hope to see him.

Here followed a full explanation, which shewed Henry's guilty neglect: and, as it was not easy to believe that any body could have been so deficient in memory as not to have recollected the circumstance during the whole day, and especially in Mr. Nicholson's presence, Ralph applied to his son to account for such conduct.

Henry could not bring himself to tell a downright falsehood; but his excuses were such as proved that the real love of truth was not in him. Thus the meanness of his spirit was easily discovered by his father, who severely condemned him for his selfishness; a selfishness that prevailed over the eternal interests of his neighbour, and over all his own imaginary zeal for God's service. Mr. Nicholson, too, added an exclamation, and a look of sorrow, that pierced Henry's heart, for he loved Mr. Nicholson dearly, and was very anxious to obtain his approbation. It was, indeed, through this anxiety that temptation had assailed him. Mr. Nicholson would have said more, but was preparing with all haste to follow John to his uncle's house, and therefore delayed his lecture till another time. Grieved and vexed beyond measure at his loss of reputation, Henry did not know what to offer in his excuse, and he remained silent, brooding over his disgrace.

“Come,” said Ralph, summoning up resolution as the good curate was going out of the house, “here is such a stormy night, I cannot be easy, or sleep in my bed, till I see you safe home again. I will go with you. It is scarcely eight o’clock I see; so I hope we shall be back again before eleven.” Mr. Nicholson and Ralph then departed together, leaving Henry and his sister to bear each other company.

For a long time Henry remained thoughtful, and somewhat sulky; and after a few fruitless efforts, on Peggy’s part, to restore him to cheerfulness, she began to think of the box she was going to make for Margery, and which she wished to present, before her young friend should leave that neighbourhood: and she said, “Now, Henry, as you will not part with this book, and as I have an equal share in it, I am going to propose dividing it; all the history part shall be yours, and the pictures mine.”

“Very likely, indeed!” cried Henry, “and then you would cut out the pictures for your foolish boxes, and your nonsense. No, no; let the pictures remain with the history, where they are most useful: it is the use for which they were made, and there they shall continue.”

“How cross you are, Henry! What if I should let the book drop into the flames?” said Peggy, playfully, at the same time swinging it to and fro, as she stood leaning over the hot blazing fire, which had attracted them both from the moment they had been left alone.

“You detestable, envious thing!” cried Henry, in a passion; “do you want to destroy the book?”

Had Henry been in a good-humour, he would have seen that Peggy was only jesting; but it gratified his temper at the moment, to act as if she had been in earnest: and, while he spoke with rage, he made an attempt to catch it out of her hand, but actually dashed it from her careless grasp into the fire. Peggy uttered a shriek of terror. Henry thrust his hand into the flames, to rescue it:—“I would not for the world lose this book,” said he. But the heat of the fire, and his burnt fingers, poor Henry could not endure, and screaming with pain, and with anger and mortification, he saw his treasure almost consumed before he could find any thing with which he could rake it from the fire. Peggy stood self-condemned, looking at her brother with fear and trembling. For some time neither of them spoke, and when they did speak, it was only to quarrel: and when,

at last, their father entered, they both began to accuse each other.

“I can perceive,” said Ralph, “that you have both been greatly to blame; but it is quite certain that neither of you could intend to destroy what affords you both so much amusement and instruction. I wish I had been here: I think I could have snatched it from the flames.”

“Indeed, you could not,” replied Henry, “as witness my blistered finger ends.”

“Well,” returned Ralph, “what is a little pain to one who thinks he could calmly die at the stake? Oh, Henry, where would be your fortitude under such a trial as that?”

Henry felt his weakness, but endeavoured to elude the subject; and, loading Peggy with a great deal of improper language, he repeated that he would rather have died than have lost Mr. Nicholson’s valuable gift.

“Yet,” returned Ralph, “you would not burn your fingers to save it! Not that I should recommend such a thing: but it shews your disposition.”

Henry. There would never have been any danger, if it had not been for that dirty-minded, covetous girl, always plaguing me to give her the book, that she might just waste it.

Peggy. Indeed, I am as sorry to lose the book as you can be. If you had not dashed it from my hands, it would have been safe yet. It was only the pictures I begged: I wanted them for ——

“You wanted!” exclaimed Henry, choking with rage and vexation. “You wanted ——”

“Come, come, children,” said Ralph, “I will have no more of this. You have both been in the wrong: you must now share in the misfortune you have yourselves incurred, and let this be a lesson to you in future.”

“I never can forgive her,” interrupted Henry.

“Oh, Henry,” said his father, “you fancied, a little time ago, that you could have suffered any provocation for Christianity’s sake. Is it like a Christian, to bear resentment? You fancied that you could, in the service of God, in support of those doctrines taught by his blessed Son, maintain your faith amidst torments; that, in your zeal to

spread the true religion, you could die a martyr ;— nay, you even wished for an opportunity of thus proving your love for Christ.—Think of this, Henry. You had, this very day, an opportunity of proving your zeal in promoting Christianity. A sick neighbour desired instruction in the true faith :—you charged yourself with his request to have a clergyman sent to him,—you forgot his wish ;—what might have been his last opportunity of making his peace with that God whom he had hitherto neglected. So little did you care, in your heart, for the service of God, and for the best interests of your neighbour, that you forgot it all in reading of those who died in the good cause. You did worse than forget : your vanity was such, that, rather than have it known that you could forget so important a duty, you incurred the far greater guilt, in the sight of *Him* to whom all hearts are open, of concealing your forgetfulness ; and, in the wilful neglect of your duty, more than doubled your guilt. Oh, how far from the spirit of martyrdom is your poor selfish mind ! Go and reflect upon all this. It is bed-time : go, humble your vanity by self-examination, and correct a character that has in it the roots of vice as well as virtue.”

The family had not been very long in bed, when Peggy came to wake her father, saying, Henry

could not get any sleep for the pain in his hand, and she wished he would come and try any remedy likely to relieve him. Ralph went to examine the burn, and found several blisters upon his fingers. "But I think," said Ralph, "it must be the vexation of your mind, Henry, more than your burnt fingers, that keeps you waking."

"No," said Henry, "I cannot bear the pain in my fingers: it is worse than any thing I ever felt."

"How!" replied Ralph, "how is it, that you have allowed yourself to be so unmanly?"

Henry's temper was in such a state, that the word unmanly, as applied to him, only irritated him more and more; but, ere he had time to answer, Peggy came with some scraped potatoe to apply to the burn, which she had prepared with all the haste she could. Henry dashed it from her hand, saying, "Nothing you can do, you foolish thing, can be of any use."

Ralph. Really, Henry, you deserve to be left to the full force of your sufferings. Peggy offered a very proper remedy; and pray recollect, as regards the book, she loses as much as yourself.

Peggy. Indeed, I do : and there is not even one picture left whole, for I have looked over every fragment.

“ Who cares for the pictures, you blockhead ? ” returned Henry. “ Let them be burnt : and, as for you, I shall hate you as long as I live—that I shall.”

Ralph. I will not suffer this language, Henry. No Christian can utter it. Reflect upon your guilt at this moment ; recall to your mind the forgiving spirit of St. Stephen, that delighted you so much the other day : think of his provocations,—think of——

“ I have not forgotten,” interrupted Henry ; “ but this holy man was suffering for some use ; he was engaged in a great cause : but am I to be plagued by a foolish girl, that wanted that valuable book for her own nonsense ? ”

Ralph. And are you to hate her for a little nonsense ? and never to forgive her for depriving you of a book ? If, for a slight provocation like this, you are to reject the commands of Christ, who died for sinners ;—if, for his sake, you will not now forgive a fault in your own sister, your

companion and playmate ;—how do you follow the example of those, who, through love for Christ, died in endeavouring to establish his religion ; who forgave, who prayed earnestly, for their worst enemies, for those who persecuted them, who brought them to torture ? It is evident that the love of Christ is not in you, Henry.

Henry. But it is, father. I love goodness. It was that foolish girl that I said I could not love : and I still believe that I should have resolution to die in a cause like that of the martyrs.

Ralph. That is, if, by dying, you could acquire fame among men ; if your action could be recorded as a proof of your zeal in God's service. For such glory as this, perhaps, you might make an effort ; though your dislike to pain, I suspect, would soon cause a failure in your resolution ; and, from what has happened this day, I see but too plainly, that the love of God, producing fruits not seen by men, and recorded in heaven only, and not on earth, would but little stir your zeal. Ralph then took the Bible, and read the following passages. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness has blinded his eyes.* (1 John ii. 9, 11.)

“Now, Henry, does not this convince you, that you cannot see your duty at all? Then why will you not listen to those who would guide you in the right way?”

Henry remained silent. His father, pleased to see that he could command himself so far at least, turned over to another text. *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.* (Matt. xviii. 21, 22.)

Henry. True, father, I must forgive. I will try to do so.

Ralph, (continuing to read.) *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* (1 John iv. 20.)

Henry. But it is hard to love those who provoke us.

Ralph. If there were no trials, there could be no proof of love. We sacrifice readily for those we love, and again, *By this shall all men know that*

ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John xiii. 35.) If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners do also even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. (Luke vi. 32—37.)

Henry. I will thank you, Peggy, to be so kind as to bring me a little more scraped potatoe.

Poor Peggy had been weeping, ever since the mortifying accident; sensible of the share she had in producing it, and of having irritated her brother by coveting that for another, to which he had a claim. She was now delighted at his request, and flew to prepare the potatoe. After its application, Henry tenderly thanked his sister, and soon fell asleep: and it may be presumed, that, from this

time, his eyes were more opened to his own character, which, from the energy of his mind, and his desire to become a good, as well as a great, man, would, it may fairly be expected, improve rapidly, and that he would be able to root out all that self-sufficiency which had hitherto blinded him to his faults: and then he would discover, that humility is the groundwork of the Christian character.

FINIS.

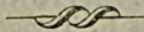
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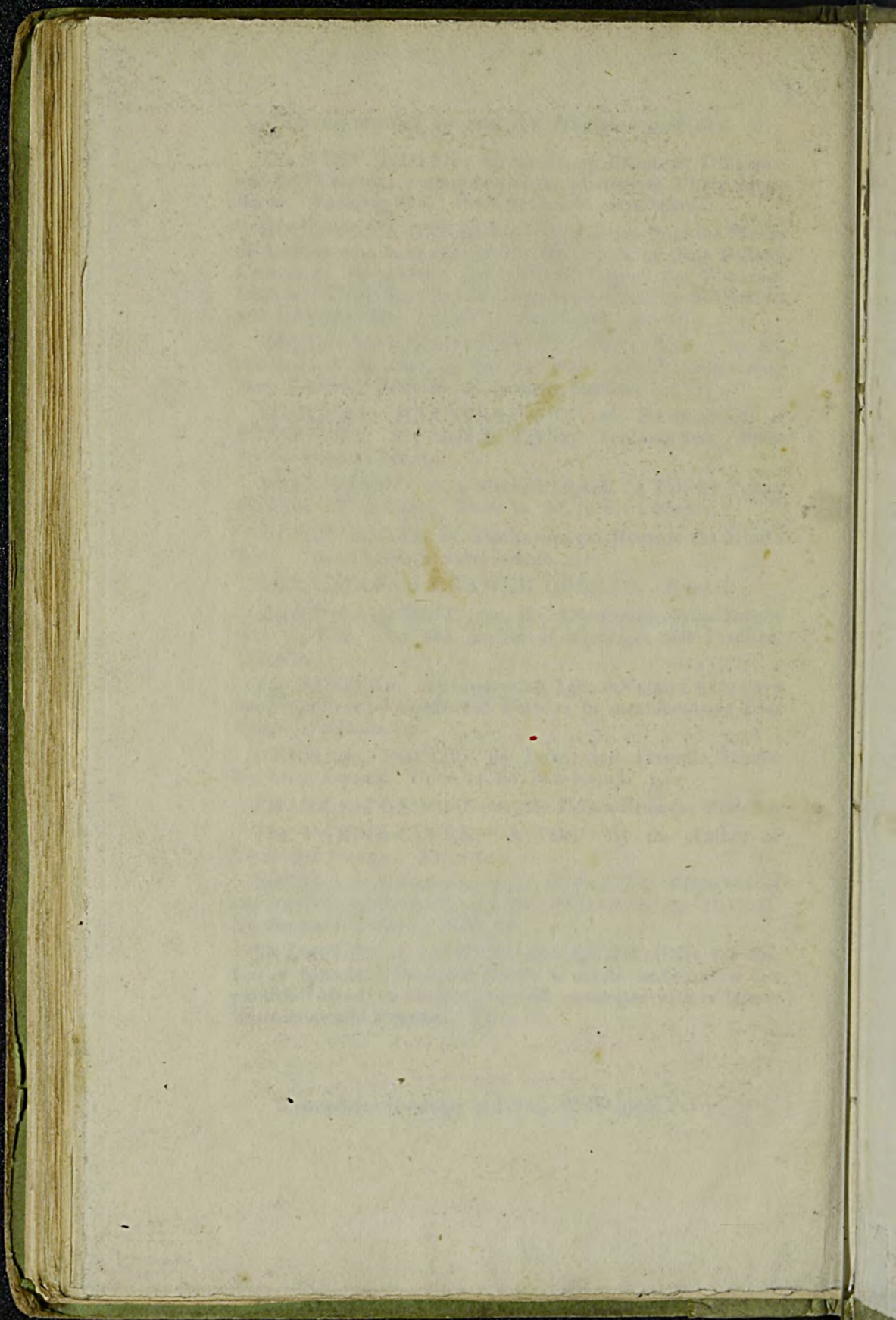
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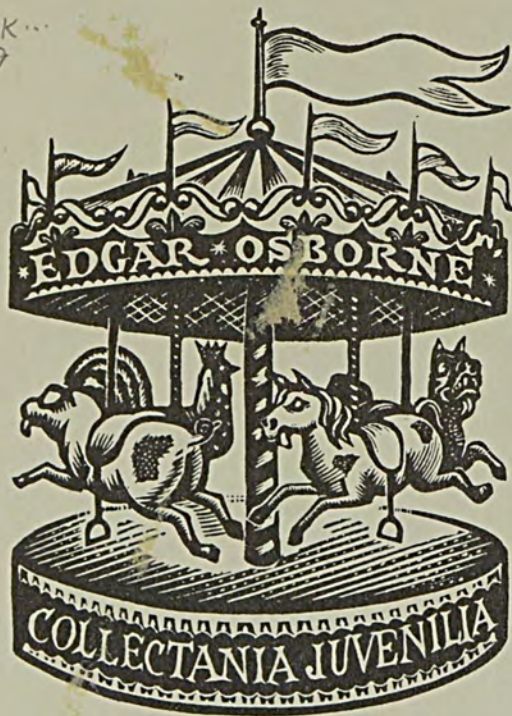
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